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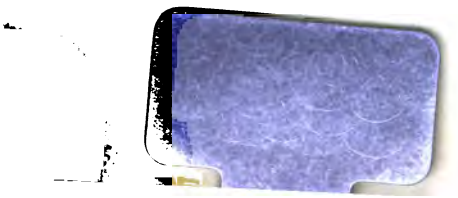

MRS. BLAKE:

A STORY OF TWENTY YEARS.

BY

MRS. NEWTON CROSLAND,

AUTHOR OF "MEMORABLE WOMEN;" "HILDRED, THE DAUGHTER," ETC.

"———the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's."
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MRS. BLAKE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WIDOW AND THE SPINSTER.

"I found,
Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
To glance behind me at my former life."

TENNYSON.

A FORTNIGHT later, and we must look in at the west-end hotel where Lady Isabella Clinton has taken up her temporary abode. It was situated in a certain narrow street, leading from one great thoroughfare to another—a street famous as the resort of well-fledged birds of passage. Nevertheless, whenever Lady Isabella glanced round her apartments,

a look of discomfort, which with time might have deepened into disgust, passed over her countenance. With only white blinds and white curtains, there was no possibility of pleasantly shadowing the rooms—so that all the harsh formality of its appointments shone out in strong relief; and who does not know the hard, prosaic expression of hotel "sitting-rooms!" Then the weather was sultry, and the London atmosphere close and oppressive. I mention such circumstances because they are not without their influence on feelings and temper.

Lady Isabella and Agnes sat hand-in-hand on the great, old-fashioned sofa. The young girl had taken off her heavy black bonnet, but in other respects she remained in out-of-door costume. Of course she was in deep mourning, and Lady Isabella had chosen to put on a black dress.

"Dear Lady Bella," said Agnes, who had her handkerchief in her hand, and failed from time to time in her attempts at controlling her tears; "dear Lady Bella, you cannot doubt the battle there has been in my heart, between 'I would' and 'I ought.'

"Agnes," replied the elder lady, with

evident irritation in her tone, "your mother asks too great a sacrifice."

"No, no, I cannot say she asked it."

"My dear, you should not cavil with me about words. What is the difference between asking you in plain English—you, who are only just beginning to learn—to set up as a portrait-painter and drawing-teacher, and lamenting over domestic affairs in such a tone that no alternative can be presented as a feasible plan of helping out the income? I know how it has all been, just as well as if I had heard the discussions. They think, because you have done so little yet, Italy is to be but a dream and delusion to you. People are so stupid and so ignorant. Well, if you come to me for my opinion, I must give it. If you have decided, that is another thing. Of course, I have no legal control over you, none whatever. I wish I had. I should know what to do."

"Oh, Lady Isabella, is it the ugly room, with its close depressing atmosphere, or is there a fierce battle of 'woulds,' and 'oughts,' and 'wills' raging in your heart also, that makes you so bitter!"

"Come, come, do not cry," she continued,

in a softer tone; "you know, Georgy, that I love you, and should be wretched to lose you."

"Georgy" was the one sparingly used pet name into which the separate dearness and tenderness of all other pet names was understood to have run. The speaking it, the hearing it, always seemed to draw their two hearts closer, as if the dead were bidding the union.

"My heart is torn," sobbed Agnes.

"I know it is; and the sacrificing of the innocent victim on the altar of mammon is not a pleasant sight to witness." And now, Lady Isabella was on her feet, pacing the room, as if by movement only she could overcome her mental excitement.

"Do not think I speak without warrant," she continued. "I know enough of English middle class society to understand the sort of sacrifices which are daily perpetrated. Slow holocausts, by which hope, love, all the natural heritages of life are surely consumed. Even genius itself, with its unfulfilled duties, its unpaid debts, and unenjoyed privileges, expires under such unnatural conditions. Agnes, are all my feelings towards you to be

merged in pity? for I hardly know an object more pitiable than that of a young girl, cultured and gently nurtured, set to fight the battle of life as chief bread-winner for a family. Shame, I say, on the conditions of society, that render the position so common that the general world does not heed it."

And, when the speaker paused in her passionate speech, her hand was on the bell-rope. "Agnes," she proceeded, "I am going out. If I leave you for two or three hours, will you wait patiently for my return?"

"My best friend, any thing you bid me, that I can do, I will do."

"Well, well."

"A carriage immediately, if you please," she said, addressing the man who answered her summons.

Millie Farrell was ill, very ill. One mental shock after another had told upon her frame, and though she had kept up during her uncle's sufferings, his death removed the strain, and she now lay prostrate, under an attack of low, nervous fever. Mrs. Blake was tending her with watchful care, and perhaps at this crisis it was scarcely a misfortune to the widow that

she had even a new trouble to divide her thoughts from her own personal sorrow. Besides, she really had a regard for Millie, and felt a tender yearning to do all she could for her dead husband's niece.

The sound of the knocker was heard in the needful stillness of that upstairs room with which we are acquainted; and a minute or two afterwards a servant brought up a card, bearing the name, "Lady Isabella Clinton," under which was written, in pencil, "urgently requests to see Mrs. Blake, on important business."

And thus came to pass the first meeting of these two women! But the one had had an hour of preparation, in which to examine, from various points of view, their strange relation to each other; and though her plans and purposes remained somewhat crude, a feeling of magnanimity, a sense of self conquest, at last had gained the victory, and gave to the bearing of Lady Isabella an indescribable dignity. Mrs. Blake, on the other hand, had not time for reflection, for consideration of how she should act, or what she should say; consequently she had no resource but to be natural, —and her nature was just now softened and malleable.

The time had been when Clara would have desired to dazzle her early rival, by her beauty and fascinations, as if to show how vain all competition between them must ever have been; but the heavy pressure of these latter troubles had wrung out of her that sort of egotism. Youth, and with it some frivolity, had been snatched from her for ever, and uncertain for the future how her daily bread was to be provided, grim care had narrowed all her sentiments into a certain half-spurious humility; yet, perhaps, it was not the rank of the visitor, not her talents, not the fine sincerity of her character, and not the fact of the by-gone injury which humbled Mrs. Blake in her presence, a twentieth part as much as did, unconsciously, her own admiring envy of independence and position.

"I must beg pardon for the liberty I have taken," said Lady Isabella when their hands had met, "the liberty I have taken at this season of sorrow; but your daughter is very dear to me, and this circumstance must plead my apology."

"You have been very kind to Agnes, Lady Isabella, and as her mother, I would wish to thank you."

"What you call kindness has been kindness to myself. Her presence has been happiness and joy to me, and I come to you, Mrs. Blake, to plead that you will not take back the light, the sunshine, out of my life."

As she spoke, their eyes met. Lady Isabella was not thinking of her own youth, of her fickle lover—but the probes of a guilty conscience touched Clara. She remembered that once already she had drawn the sunshine out of that life, and her eyes drooped, and her words faltered.

"I see you understand me," continued Lady Isabella; "yet in wishing Miss Bendoran to remain under my protection, I do not think I am wholly selfish. I wish to rescue her from premature toil, from the certainty of a dwarfed life, and from all the ills which must accrue from an unnatural position."

"Unnatural!"

"Yes, and pray pardon my blunt speaking. You have seen, doubtless, those dwarfed trees which cunning gardeners torture down to poor inches of size. Even an oak may be so treated, and its far-spreading roots confined to the porcelain vase of a gay window. I always think that any special gift of genius is

similarly cramped when it is set to toil, to produce poor, small, defective blossoms, just when it ought to be silently growing and developing."

"But don't you think, Lady Isabella, that Agnes already paints well enough to earn a respectable living? I know she could have some pupils to begin with immediately. Perhaps even she will be better able to adapt herself to what is most popular in style, than if she had dawdled on another year or two, and become more fixed in her particular opinions. As it is, she talks about art in a way I don't understand; and I find the world has very little faith in young people when they set up as strange theorists. They are not believed in until they can *do*, and that is why I am anxious Agnes should not lose any more time. I think your Ladyship will agree with me when you reflect on the urgency of our position."

Alas! "her Ladyship" was very little likely to agree with Clara Blake on any bearings of the subject that was paramount in their minds; but the more she perceived that their thoughts emanated from the opposite poles of the mental sphere, the more tho-

roughly did she comprehend the sacrifice that would be involved by Agnes passing under the yoke of the mere worldly money-getting influence. And yet she could not deny that if Mrs. Blake were really destitute, and incompetent to earn a subsistence for herself and young children, it would be the duty of the elder daughter to step forward as the burthen-bearer. Nevertheless, she could not refrain from again reverting to the disastrous blight that must ensue from Agnes bending her immature powers—her untrained genius —to the earning of her daily bread.

"But what is to be done?" continued Mrs. Blake. "While my poor husband lived"—and here the handkerchief was raised, to wipe away very genuine tears—"while he lived, small as our means had become, he never would have permitted Agnes's exertions to be taxed for us. I am sure he keenly felt throwing her off, as it were, when our misfortunes came. But it is so different now; we have literally nothing certain to depend on, for the old clerk who assisted us is not in circumstances to positively promise me an allowance. It is true, as perhaps Agnes may have told you, that he proposes taking my

boy, and educating him with his own: and he talks of their being jointly his successors in business; but all these things are more or less uncertain: and really, without Agnes, I know not what could become of us. I worked for her when I was young, but time and trouble have told on me. I am not like the same woman that I was in my first widowhood."

"Yes, time—time and trouble—tell on us all," said Lady Isabella, half musingly; her eyes bent on the ground, as she absently traced the pattern of the carpet with the point of her parasol.

"Did it ever occur to you, Mrs. Blake," said Lady Isabella, breaking a long pause by her words; "did it ever occur to you that I may have injured you, and your daughter?"

"Injured us!"

"Do you not know that I derive an income under the will of the late General Bendoran?"

"I have heard so; but, to be frank, I know the bequest was accompanied by bitter words, that made it evident the General would rather have thrown his money into the sea than left it to his nephew."

"He left me, in the hands of trustees,"

returned Lady Isabella—and she grew marble white as she spoke—"he left me the interest of twenty thousand pounds, without power to touch the principal, though privileged to will it away, provided that the legatee was not George Bendoran."

"Yes, it was just this we heard. But since poor George was at any rate disinherited, I am sure he was always glad that you had so considerable a bequest."

"Was he? But did you not both feel that the dead hand had a far stretch?" And now the quickly-beating heart had sent a rich flush to the marble cheek.

"Perhaps so," replied the widow, "but on his death bed George ceased to bear enmity to his uncle's memory."

"I rejoice to hear it: for, with all his eccentricity, my old friend had a noble nature. We knew each other better than do many fathers and daughters. Perhaps his bequest proved it; and I have sometimes felt that he left me a duel to fight between his first angry design, and what might have been his calmer determination. Mrs. Blake, I made my will in favour of Agnes when she was a month old, and I have never altered it."

Mrs. Blake bowed her head, but her cheek changed with the flutter of expectation.

"What I am doing—what I am saying," continued Lady Isabella, "costs me a bitter pang;" and that it did so was evident, from her ill-concealed emotion—"but I suppose it is good for me that a darling root of pride which I have cherished should be plucked out of my heart. Ever since the time when I was rudely taught that I was unlovely and unloveable, I have been jealous of conferring benefits where my motives could be misunderstood. But now I have no alternative. Mrs. Blake, will you accept from me an allowance of two hundred per annum, instead of mortgaging your daughter's toil? And will you give your sanction to her leaving England again with me?"

There are occasions—and this was one—when words are so heavily laden with momentous thoughts and quickly springing emotions, that only the feelings produced by the words remain for the memory. The interview was not much protracted, but these two beings, who had purposely stood apart ever since their youth, separated after that day's meeting with something like tender regard.

Broken by sorrow, and her destiny now reshaped by the strong hand of generosity, Clara, watching the receding figure of her visitor, asked herself, for the first time in her life, "What was I, to be preferred to such a woman?" While Lady Isabella, leaning back in the corner of the carriage, permitted a few silent tears to flow, as she mused thus on her rival's life and destiny.

"How handsome she must have been in her youth—and brilliant, I have no doubt. And to love and lose *twice!* Who can bear enmity to one who has so suffered? Not I, certainly."

Lady Isabella looked radiant as she entered the dull hotel sitting-room—radiant as people generally look when the best part of their natures has just been wholly victorious. Nevertheless, there were tears in her eyes, and her voice trembled as she folded Agnes in her arms.

"My child, you are mine now," she exclaimed with emotion; "and, oh! I am so glad that I have seen your mother."

"Seen my mother!" replied Agnes with astonishment.

"Yes. Then you did not guess where I was gone without you? Sit down; I would rather tell you now—at once—and have it all over."

But why go on? The reader, who is acquainted with Lady Isabella and Agnes, can imagine with crystalline clearness all that passed between them. Nor is there any need to tell how many weeks slipped away, during which Agnes spent much time with her mother. Their relations to each other were certainly altered for the better, though the attempt of youth to influence its elders is marvellously like the toil of Sisyphus.

Also Lady Isabella and Agnes passed some days at Sutton Court—days which would have been full of rich enjoyment, but that they were both conscious of little clouds on the horizon —clouds not shaped enough to be looked on as portents of particular trial or disaster, and yet dark enough to make their shadows felt.

CHAPTER II.

A STUDIO IN ROME.

"We are but day labourers all,
Early or late, or first or last, at the gate in the vineyard wall."
OWEN MEREDITH.

THREE winters have come and gone, and it is the early spring of 1854. For nearly three years Isabella Clinton and Agnes Bendoran have remained in the lovely land which is girt by the Alpine wall, and the blue, foam-fringed waters. They have dwelt alternately in all its fairest cities, those haunts of living men, where the spirit of genius still hovers, and in soft, clear accents whispers to the soul the lessons of a mighty past, eternal in its influences. They have journeyed also among the lonely hills that seemed to be asking of heaven how long oppression should

prevail: they have grown more and more familiar with nature, in the regions where her language is most explicit, and ever when shortening days mimicked the northern severity, had returned to sit beneath the sheltering mantle of the "Niobe of nations," as she mourned on the shore of the sullen Tiber.

They tell you in Rome that strangers who drink at the fountain of Trevi before departing, will assuredly return to the Eternal City. The legend has a deeper meaning than lies on the surface. They whose poet natures drink of the true fountain which rises from a deep source, and dashes its sparkles far and wide over that sacred soil, are bound by a spell. They cannot shake the dust so entirely from their feet, that no talisman grains remain to clog their departing steps, and draw them back sooner or later by the subtle force of the spirit's yearning.

Old Rome, with its uncrumbling ruins that shape for us the form of the giants, as a tenantless sea-shell shows us the mould of its dead lord! And even as the shell has murmurings for the willing ear, so are there conch-like utterings ever audible in those mighty

fabrics. Have poets and theologians, philosophers and historians, painters and sculptors, and critics, caught up all the echoes so absolutely that there is nothing which is not trite to be said or thought on the subject? Hardly so. Perhaps as with wider insight the new generations glide on the scene, bringing with them the legacies of accumulated knowledge, they may find that only vaguely and fitfully, and to a few isolated minds, has the real majesty of the world's wonder as yet been indicated. Old Rome, that ruled the world for centuries, only to show how straight were the limits of Pagan civilization; Old Rome, that tortured Christianity, but without triumph, and then cradled to corrupt it!

Mediæval Rome, that is, the Rome of Popes and Kaisers, of priests in purple and fine linen, bearing the fisherman's keys, but suffering no worldly crucifixion, unerect or otherwise—emulating Dives rather than Lazarus; Popes and Kaisers that, possessed by the lust of power and all the avarices, strove to crush out liberty, alike with the pastoral crook and the warrior's sword! Will there ever be poets enough in the world to exhaust the cadences of Rome's tremendous story?

Not, I think, if the seven hills were crowded with bards.

Rome—the Rome of to-day! Where we northerns carry the last new fashions, and trail our Manchester muslins up the steep Capitol stairs, and lay our well-gloved hand upon the Brazen Wolf, and peer into the face of the Dying Gladiator, half expecting the discoloured stone to quiver in the death-agony. Modern Rome, where the thoughtful or thoughtless Englishman wanders through the labyrinths of the Vatican galleries, between long lines of catacomb tablets, lifted from the rest of centuries to this upper air, and then paces such streets of sculpture that, helped by the Pagan associations of the place, he might dream Medusa had passed through a populous city, and changed its wayfarers to stone.

Modern Rome, where Romans writhe beneath the chain whose rusty links are held down by a foreign soldiery; Rome, where ARTISTS of all nations congregate and lead a life of devotion to *Art* as a natural consequence of their taste, their talents, and their surroundings. In Rome, among artists, Art is naturally and familiarly recognised as a first

object, and this it is which produces a certain mental atmosphere, eminently conducive to the development of true genius, and the keeping in its place of mere mediocrity. It is true, that genius is infinitely more ready to appreciate to the full mediocrity's respectable doings, than mediocrity is to recognise a majesty beyond itself; and true it is that the unconscious insolence and ready assurance of small minds is apt to be mistaken for the needful, obstinate, self-reliance of the as yet uncrowned victor; but in the art circles of Rome such mistakes are, I think, less enduring than elsewhere.

In the first place, artists have ever at hand some of the noblest master-pieces in the world, by which to measure the differences of modern productions; and in the next, the most highly cultured minds from all the capitals of Christendom come from time to time to Rome, and there disseminate the newest and brightest thoughts that have been flashed out in the north and the west. Alternations of that sort of "society" which consists in interchanges of vivid thought, with periods of quiet and leisure, conduce to the realization of the true student's life, that life which is usually as dif-

ficult to shape as it is precious to enjoy. Solitude is not enough, we want the friction of other minds against our own; perpetual intercourse with even the most congenial spirits leaves us no power to gather up and order our own resources; and oh, worst condition of all, when the mind has to fritter away its resources among the busy, restless, trivial conventionalities of a circle that has no aspiration. But in the Art Society of Rome, as I have said, a propitious condition prevails.

Perhaps such reflections as these were in the mind of Agnes Bendoran, as she stood at her easel, with palette and brush in hand, that March morning. The picture before her was ostensibly finished, and her studio was to be open to-day for friends to come and examine her work; but, artist like, she saw to the last some line that needed deepening, or some shade softening. Nevertheless, her face wore an expression of grateful joy, for her heart recognised the value of her exceptional privileges. Her picture was the long since commissioned one of "Labour," or, as she preferred calling it, "The Labourers;" a picture which she, through her privileges of leisure and liberty,

had executed, if not to her own entire satisfaction, still with a degree of power and finish she would have been hopeless to attain had the best of her time and the freshness of her mind been frittered away in teaching drawing and painting portraits.

She had selected the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard for the illustration of the theme, and had, therefore, introduced several figures to typify her meaning. She had just darkened, as by a magic touch, the shadow of an overhanging branch, and was receding to mark the effect, when, without knock or warning, as was sometimes her wont, Lady Isabella entered the studio.

"I judged, my child, you were here," she exclaimed, with the gay tenderness which belonged to her usual manner, "but do put away your brushes; I have not the heart to see you mend, for fear of a marring. How I marvel," she exclaimed, "what the temporary verdict will be, that is the verdict of the many to-day; for the ultimate judgment on such a picture, I have no fear."

"Will my friends at Sutton be satisfied?" replied Agnes. "It is of them I am thinking."

"I feel so certain of their appreciation,"

returned her friend, "that I am hardly curious to know what they may think. What I am eager about is, to know how such a thing as this will be taken here."

"It is crude and imperfect," sighed Agnes.

"Of course it is—I never said otherwise."

"My sky," resumed the artist, "is not the sky that is panelled this moment through my window."

"Of course it is not; but if you have, as I think you have, indicated its fathomless blue, suggested its palpitating ether, you have done well. And there is something in your picture that suffers even this southern sky to be only an accessory."

"And the youth who stood for me with the uplifted branch, till his arms ached, and the flies settled on the grapes. I have not fairly portrayed his beautiful features."

"But you have sublimated his expression, till, in rendering him a type of aspiration, you have shewn the true soul lightened of its swathings—have shown himself as he might be, rather than he is."

"That was what I meant to do, certainly," said Agnes. "All my truest understanding

of people has been by linking myself to their best—regarding it, and believing in it. There is seldom a face in which I do not find some lines to deepen, until wild fancy mocks me, as if the soul really grew and brightened at my bidding."

"And mark me, Agnes, through life you will err less by judging your friends and acquaintances through their idealized Best, than by the measure of any other standard."

"I know it—I know it now. I felt it vaguely in my childhood. It seems to me that the true artist sees the image of God in humanity, through all its defacings—as the poet of words, so the poet of form and colour—and that the scoffers, and sneerers, and doubters look only upon a soiled mask of humanity, which they themselves yet further blur and distort."

"What you are doing, Agnes, is the true studying of nature, that teaches us, if we will but learn, great things and small—great things often out of little things—but little things always subservient to great thoughts."

"Indeed, yes; that child at the foot of the ladder—you remember the work I had to scatter the flowers with which he is playing,

till a happy gust of wind did it for me. And the snake that is trailing among them. I drew his slimy length from a sketch I made on the Campagna."

"I remember. I think, indeed, I know all your models. Yet stay. Who is it you have for the white-haired old man, who has borne the heat and burthen of the day? There is a likeness—a look—that is familiar to me. Who is it?"

"You have found me out, though I did not mean the likeness to be absolute. I could not find a very old man in Rome that quite suited me. The Nestor and Ulysses, the Jupiter and Neptune, of the modern Greek school, would not do, and the old models are corrupted by sitting for such subjects, till they cannot fall into the pose I wanted. So I drew the head and throat from a sketch I had in my portfolio."

"I see, I see. It is Mrs. Sutton's father, dear Mr. Johnstone. Such a tribute will be a new charm in the picture."

"Ah, but I should not have painted him," replied Agnes, with a shake of her head—"I should not have painted him, if he had not quite suited me."

It was once thoughtlessly wished that there were some machine to do for sound what photographic science does for form—catch the fleeting accent of speech, as the instantaneous gesture may be caught and kept. But the boon would be too awful for realization—too like a foreshadowing of the hereafter when we are to render an account of every vain and idle word. It is well that the echoes of silly talk die away, or are absorbed in the after-surges of truth—truth, which is the only ultimate that is caught up by tongue after tongue, till it girdles the earth, and absorbs in its harmony all the discords of falsity.

Much nonsense was talked before Agnes Bendoran's picture that spring day—arrogantly talked, as nonsense usually is; while a few of the observers were startled into the persuasion that this English girl had found a path of her own, and that, walking therein, she was outside the pale of conventional criticism.

The aptest reader-at-sight of the painter's meaning was a young American tourist,—a girl with spirit as fresh as the morning which springs with a flush from its ocean bath, and wakens the homes of her native land. Of

artist soul, she had found her early surroundings but half articulate, and had come to Rome expecting that antique and mediæval art would express themselves clearly. And in a measure so they did. I think they told this Ida, as we will call her, pretty nearly all they had to say; and of some of the lessons she never wearied. But there were times when she felt that art had still a chrysalis shell to burst before it could be the representative art of the forward minds of the nineteenth century. She did not indulge in raptures and loquacity, or use the studio set phrases of admiration,—but she pressed Agnes's hand, as she said, "You have lifted a curtain for us, but so quietly, that we give you small thanks. We only wonder how it was that we could not regard life and nature from this point before."

There were various other admirers, who admired within narrower boundaries. They who verified the fidelity of leaf and tendril, by help of a magnifying glass; who liked nature as an unlettered hind may be pleased with the rich cover of a book, but who did not know the alphabet of her striving utterance, her symbolic teaching.

In the ante-room, people, of course, spoke more freely than in the presence of the young painter and her friend.

"I suppose this is what in England would be called Pre-Raphaelite art," said one. "What does it all mean?"

"It means, I think," replied another, "the affectation of knowing better than one's elders, —of despising time-honoured custom—of daring to be eccentric in seeking to be original."

"Well, I don't know," interposed a third. "I don't pretend to be a judge of Art. I only know what touches my feelings, and there is something in this picture that quickens my pulse, and makes me more brave-hearted. Like you, I, at first, hardly knew what it meant, but I ought to have known, and we should have known with a little patience."

"Yes, of course," rejoined the second speaker; "fancy is very accommodating."

"But mutable as a cloud when it does not anchor by a truth," said the other; and he continued, "after all, I cannot help looking with hope and joy on this reverting to first principles, this faithful imitation of nature, and earnest, humble questioning of her teach-

ings. I remark, too, that these pre-Raphaelites, as, for convenience sake, we will call them, are all young; and I cannot help believing their advent is a wholesome sign of the times."

"How so?"

"I see in it the dawn of a brighter mental epoch, that at least in England and America is struggling towards a noon, by its literature not less than its art."

"Ah, I know, you think more highly than I of modern literature and living writers."

"Indeed I do," said the other; "and I have remarked that those people whose reading is limited to the classics approved by several generations, in reality know less of even their spirit than does the reader of great new books, who is cognizant of the advancing waves of thought, and, consequently, can measure where they touch the base of the old beacon rocks, and where they overleap them. Yet, after all, comparison between different authors, except in the instances in which they have treated the same subjects, is unjustifiable. If the thoughts of our Creator are so infinite that he does not give us two leaves precisely alike, we may be

very sure that every creative soul is charged with some message it behoves us to hear."

"What do you mean by creative soul?" asked the first speaker. "It is a queer phrase."

"But there is good warrant for it," interposed "Ida," who had now joined the party. "If I remember rightly, it is Tasso who with great, yet not irreverent daring, calls the poet a creator, when he says,

'non c'è in mondo chi merita
Il nome di creatore, che Dio ed il Poetà.'

Don't you think in the Millennium that earth will be peopled with poets?"

"I cannot say I have thought much about the Millennium," said the other.

"But I have," resumed Ida; "and, by fits and flashes, I get an idea of the marshalling of forces that is going on for the great battle of Armageddon, which, however, in the sense of lesser outpost skirmishing, is being fought every day."

"Where are we getting to?" exclaimed the first speaker, and the kernel of his civil words was a sneer. "From creative souls to

Tasso and Revelation! Madam, we have not all your swiftness of comprehension."

"Oh, the distances are not great, and the thought-travelling will soon bring us back to Miss Bendoran's picture."

"How so?"

"Well, thus. It seems to me that the Universe of Thought is more or less in a chaotic state. The creative soul, be it of poet or painter, musician, sculptor, or what not faithful shewer of inward truth by outward means, gives shape, substance, in reality an indestructible life, to the Thing he has produced. As, henceforth, it circles in the Thought Universe with rounded completeness, it is a star to light, to attract, and to perturb other mental forces. Now every God's truth, that is eliminated from chaotic darkness, makes the world a little brighter, so that we can see more clearly foul from fair, and truth from falsity. The brighter light is making misled spirits see their error, and fly from it; it is making them who instinctively love the right cling to it yet more fondly, and with a reason for the faith that is in them; and, if it makes those who love the darkness to herd more densely together, we

cannot help that; it is still a marshalling for the battle. Don't you see it so?"

"Well; yes,—perhaps so. But about this strange picture?"

"The painter has disentangled from chaos a thought about Labour, has rounded and shaped it, breathed into it a breath of life, and sent it careering through the Thought Universe. Such thoughts are, I think, of the morning stars that sing for rapture and glory, though our clay-closed ears are dull of hearing; but, as the chorus swells, surely we shall be forced to listen. Then will come the Millennium, in which falsehood must be unmasked, and humanity labouring in unclouded faith and perfect love, shall momentarily perceive, and seize, and shapen for universal recognition, some beautiful atom of truth. Then, surely, the world will be peopled by poets, the Creators, whose works will be voices to join the Great TE DEUM, and cry 'continually,' in joy unwearying, 'Holy—holy—holy—Lord God of Sabaoth.'"

CHAPTER III.

A PAIR OF FRIENDS.

"Heureux qui peut aimer."—Victor Hugo.

It is said that there are a thousand studios in Rome; and those who remember the number of streets and "vicoli," mainly devoted to the occupation of artists, can readily credit the estimate. Of course the band of artists is not an unsevered brotherhood. Difference of language is one cause of the separation; for only a few among the many strangers resident in Rome so thoroughly master each others' tongues as to be able to exchange ideas, with all their subtle differences, though fluently they may make their desires of the outer life comprehended by those about them.

Then again, while humanity is frail and erring, it will yield to strong prejudices and

mean rivalries, masking bad passions under better-sounding names; and nationality too plays its part, mounting in the mental thermometer to a sort of fever heat, when a few compatriots assemble together in a foreign land. Thus artist society is split up into a great many separate cliques, and woe betide the stranger who has but one letter of introduction, and has not the courage to break out of leading-strings, and make acquaintances for himself.

Lady Isabella Clinton, however, was very differently situated. Italy, throughout the length and breadth of its land, was to her an Alma Mater; and she seemed to have mystic keys, with which she could unlock its best treasures, inclusive of the minds that are there working and growing. She knew the best people of the best cliques, and at her weekly friendly receptions endeavoured as much as possible to bring them together. This extended knowledge was of infinite service to Agnes Bendoran. She escaped the mannerism of any set school, while she profited by weighing and examining the best qualities of each; all which training bestowed on her a just confidence in her own indivi-

duality and powers of interpretation and expression. She was also considered on a somewhat different footing from the generality of artists; for though she could not be called other than an artist by profession, seeing how devotedly she applied herself to her work, it seemed tacitly understood that neither fame nor money was a primary object with her, but real development of her art nature.

The truly great are almost ever the appreciating and the generous, and they would have praised and encouraged her under any circumstances: but the small and the mean, in whom disappointment had bred envy, were now constrained to see merit, and they did so with less discomfort when they found reasons for the young painter's proficiency. "Ah! but think of her opportunities!" such persons would exclaim; "if we had had years of travel and study, without the cark and care of working for bread, what should not we have done?"

Of course she had had advantages; they were part of her life, part of the means for her soul development. Least of all people in the world can the artist "make bricks without straw." Why the novel-reader is, or ought to

be, utterly sick of the impossible successes with which the genius of fiction always meets at last, notwithstanding the full tide of circumstance that has flowed steadily against him. It is not thus in real life. Watch the careers of the world's famous ones, and however unpropitious the early surroundings may have seemed, there has always been some golden hour in which there germinated the seed that rose to success. Multitudinous acorns perish where a few oaks flourish, and God's dealing with the lower orders of creation has commonly some antitype in the higher. Even a certain amount of neglect in early life is far more advantageous to mental growth than the best-intended protection and advice, if these be unwise and unsympathetic.

And with regard to women-artists, they, simply because they are Women, have so strong a tide of circumstances always setting against their achieving a great worldly success, that I am persuaded they need far more surrounding advantages than men do, to enable them to make their way, and become exceptional. Not that it should be implied that they are deficient in the power and might of genius, but that their genius is wanted in

the world for holier purposes than the achievement of worldly success, and is drawn by an invisible force into the course for which it was intended. It is wanted for diffusion, not concentration. It is wanted to filter almost silently through the minute details of domestic life, strengthening and refreshing, purifying and refining the young and the ignorant, the coarse and the dull. Compressed into homely channels, it sometimes changes its aspect, and takes the name of common sense; or, falling in pleasanter places, gets acknowleged as woman's influence. And thus it comes to pass that woman's genius does not make such a name in the world as man's, though every now and then there is vindicated its right to a throne by the effulgence of a De Stael, a Somerville, or a Barrett Browning.

Agnes was as little likely to have proved a great painter without Lady Isabella's protection and assistance, as she was to have grown up truthful and honest, faithful and self-denying, without her cousin Beta's steady influence, and the Sutton family's sustaining friendship, to counteract the worldly training of her clever, pleasure-loving mother: all

which circumstances might, or might not, be duly weighed when her merits were discussed by her friends and acquaintances.

Just now, indeed, her artist talent was being discussed much more widely than she suspected, though the several offers of purchase-money for her picture might have betrayed to her how much it was an object of admiration. The fact of its being a commission detracted not a whit from the interest it had elicited, for we do not always disparage the grapes out of reach; and when, a few days after the incidents lately narrated, the picture was talked about at a *table-d'hôte* dinner at one of the hotels in Rome, two young Englishmen at the table were without suspicion that the "it" and the "she" so often mentioned, referred to a work which one of them had suggested, and to a person they knew so well.

The Englishmen were Edgar Sutton and Arthur Rivingstone, who, having only just arrived, travel-wearied with the tedium of a vetturini journey, determined not to present themselves at Lady Isabella's residence until the following morning. Moreover, Edgar had grave reasons for waiting for letters the next

morning, before showing himself; the same grave reasons which had prevented Lady Isabella from being apprised of his coming. If we listen to the discourse of the two friends when again alone, we may gather something of their motives and purposes. They had strolled but a short distance from the hotel, and were still in the neighbourhood of the Piazza di Spagna, the strangers' quarter.

"I suppose pleasure always has its alloy," said Edgar, "and that with the fulfilment of our wishes there always comes some bitter disappointment. To think that we are really standing in Rome, and yet that sordid cares so intrude that I cannot wholly give myself up to the enchantment of the place!"

"The sympathy you feel for the trouble that awaits Lady Isabella," replied Arthur Rivingstone, "hardly deserves to be called a sordid care on your part. But certainly it is strange that the villany of her trustees and the curious complication of my affairs should have made up the mixed and prosaic motives for your coming to Italy."

"As for your position, my dear fellow," observed Edgar, "few people, I think, would consider that quite prosaic. Here you are,

on your way to the East to join your regiment, and learn the sternest lessons of a soldier's life, and heir to fortune and position that are slipping out of the grasp of a relative so old and infirm, that in the course of nature you will soon be called on to assert your claims."

"But to have them disputed," interrupted Arthur.

"Exactly so. A disagreeable circumstance, but not what we commonly call prosaic. If I properly understand the duties I have undertaken, it is rather a romantic chain of evidence which I have to disentangle."

"Perhaps so; and really, Edgar, I think you have a better head for mastering such complications than I have. I believe my dear grandfather felt so when he parted from you with so much emotion."

"Certainly I shall never forget Lord Rivingstone's solemn benediction. I feel as if it clung about me with a sustaining power. The touch of his thin, trembling fingers upon my shoulder, the quiver of his voice, when he assured me that his father, who was the soul of honour, was thoroughly assured of the justice of his title, seem present with me con-

stantly; and if I fail in your cause, I think it will not be for want of will to succeed."

"And if the worst befal me, I must hew out my own path with my sword, that is all. This, indeed, I will do at any rate, for I should not be worthy to inherit honours if I could not add a leaf or two to the wreath. So we will trust to justice for the victory, and that God will defend the right."

"Meanwhile, since God works even miracles by means, I intend to labour for you diligently, and I look to Lady Isabella to give me assistance, for she is at home here."

"Ah, but—poor lady, she will be in trouble about this loss of property."

"Yes, for a little while," replied Edgar; "but dear Lady Bella is brave and clear-seeing, and will bear the shock in a right womanly spirit. For many reasons I must tell her of my father's heavy losses through the same channel, and I can fancy that she will fret about them in a more persistent manner than she will for her own share in the trouble."

"Have Mr. Sutton's losses, then, been so very heavy?" asked Rivingstone.

"Heavier, I fear, than we yet know; heavy

enough, to alter all the plans of my life—all, perhaps, except one."

"Oh, Edgar, I did not know this: how self-absorbed, how indifferent you must have thought me!"

"Not at all, my dear boy. If you knew the innermost secrets of my heart, you would see that though I am no despiser of wealth, it neither holds the first nor the second place in my esteem. I have arrived at the conclusion that there are just two realities in life, round which all the circumstances of life circle. To be sure, one of the realities is so tremendous that it comprehends time and eternity."

"I have heard you say something like this before. You mean Religion."

"Yes, an abiding Christian faith, which, lifted out of the shallows of corruptible sectarianism, shall be broad enough and deep enough to permeate all our actions, to consecrate our talents, and intensify our utility—that is the first reality of human life; and I believe if we can possess it, that all the gifts which are really good for us will be added to it."

"Amen. I go with you thus far heart and soul. But the second reality?"

"With the lady moon and the stars above

for silent witnesses, and you only to listen, I will own what to me it is. If you do not think with me, you will not scorn my thought. —Love—not *a* woman's love, but *the* woman's love that alone can satisfy—that is my second reality of human life."

"You need not fear that at four-and-twenty I shall gainsay you." As they spoke they were leaning over the low parapet near the Scala di Trinità, and Rivingstone was thankful that the flickering gaslights were too feeble and far between to light up his countenance.

"Arthur, I trust if we live, that we may think the same on this subject at four score as we do at four-and-twenty. Every old man and old woman I ever deeply reverenced devoutly believed in love."

"Yes; and are not the words of those we reverence like winged seeds? We never know how long they may float about before they fall into genial soil and strike root. When I was a mere child, I recollect hearing an old man say, 'Believe the poets, for they tell more truth in a page than the mere gatherer up of facts may happen to see in his whole lifetime.' Of course I could not compre-

hend such words at the time, but the hour came when they struck root, and many a time have they kept me from joining in the scorn of the scorner, and from darkening my understanding with the vapours of sophistry. Never fear, Edgar, that I shall even smile at your earnestness about love."

"Some day, perhaps, I shall make a confession, but not till I know my fate for weal or for woe."

"And perhaps I am not without a suspicion," answered Rivingstone; "but let it be as you say."

"Indeed!—What have I ever done, or ever said, to make you think—to make you fancy"—and Edgar hesitated in his speech as people often do when some sacred depth of thought is unexpectedly stirred.

"You have said and done very little that could attract even my attention, and absolutely nothing to arouse suspicion in any one less open to a sympathy of this sort than myself. But, Edgar, when we have walked through orange groves and inhaled their delicious wealth, we recognise a kindred odour, if it clings ever so faintly about the garments of our friends."

"And you have loved! But surely not hopelessly?"

"Once I thought hopelessly, and I wonder now that I did not quite sink into the gulf of despair. But hardly had I fully recognised my own wretchedness, when I began to build a little raft of hope out of the wreck. I have been patient, and it grows stronger. I was but a boy, and so like a boy I blundered, not knowing that I had to do with an exceptional woman — and yet not so, unless she were exceptional by being an intensely womanly woman. Oh, for the chance of wooing like a strong man, now that manhood has taught me some of the lessons of life! But something must happen before I can be on a restored footing. Fool that I was to sue too soon!"

"Certainly there are various ways of wooing," replied Edgar, with a smile; "as we stand here we can recal an old Roman method. Yonder hills are still near enough to remind us of the Sabine brides."

"And, according to all accounts, they made very loving and faithful Roman matrons. There was a case of exceptional circumstances reconciled by a savage, exceptional act. And every now and then there arises some glorious crea-

ture, so full of strength and beauty, of power, and of grace, that it seems as if he who would woo her must have something about him of the old Roman type."

"But not to woo as they wooed in the old Sabine times," exclaimed Edgar, with a laugh.

"No, no, but with the strength of the old Roman arm, welded into strength of wit and force of love. But enough of confession for to-night, don't you think so?"

"Yes. Let us go back to the hotel, and behave ourselves like sensible men, as we flatter ourselves we certainly are."

CHAPTER IV.

BESIDE THE PICTURE.

"The poetry of earth is ceasing never."

KEATS.

"AND you have told me the worst, the very worst, and without reserve," said Lady Isabella, when she had listened to the ill news of which Edgar Sutton was the bearer.

Her trustees had made away with a great portion of the property bequeathed to her by General Bendoran. One of them, Richard Moore, a brother of our old acquaintance, Basil Moore, on the discovery of the fraud, had shot himself, as a summary way of closing accounts with this world. The other individual was supposed, under a false name, to have decamped to Australia. Apparently, there was only a mere wreck of the property

left to be stranded and reclaimed; the rest had been engulfed in a great scheme of villany, by which the Sutton family had also suffered grievously.

"Indeed, yes," replied Edgar, speaking with almost the tenderness of a son; and he held her hand as he spoke, and played with her bright rings, just as he had been used to do in boyhood, a dozen years ago. "Indeed, I have told you the worst, tersely and abruptly, deeming it wisest and kindest to let one shock suffice to convey all the knowledge."

"And I thank you, my dear Edgar, for your kindness and prudence. There," she continued, wiping away the tears that she had not been able wholly to restrain—"I shall be better soon. It is a shock—it is a blow; but, if I know myself at all, it is for Agnes I grieve, not for myself, except that the assurance of her independence would have reflected happiness on me; so far, I know I am selfish."

"But, dear godmamma, may not Agnes Bendoran be happy, apart from gifts of fortune bestowed by you?"

"I must hope that it will be so; and I am thankful that fortune, for the sake of its uses,

has been spared so long. Still, there is no help for it. She must now toil for money."

"But you do not think that a degradation, I know."

"Degradation! Never, for a moment. But I think the condition that sort of toil implies one of supreme temptation to the artist."

"You mean that it tempts the artist to work down to the level of a popular taste."

"Yes, instead of calmly holding on the course of leader and teacher."

"Godmamma, do you know, it was not only to break the bad news to you, and to make inquiries about old documents for Rivingstone, and discoveries about a man who usurped that name, that I came to Italy?"

"For pleasure and improvement, then?"

"Pleasure and improvement must, I suppose, follow on my steps; but, dear Lady Bella, there is an object much nearer to my heart. A month ago, when my worldly prospects were fair, and when Agnes seemed niched in ease and prosperity, I had planned to come hither, and seek her love and her hand. Now that I too must be a toiler, I

come still to seek her love and her plighted troth, with feelings, I think, intensified, just in the proportion that one must value a chief good gift, when the lighter treasures of life are slipping away."

"And your parents?" exclaimed Lady Isabella, her face lighting up with a flush of joy. "What say they?"

"I had their consent at the time I mention, and they have since renewed it."

"Then my heart's best wishes go with you," cried Lady Isabella. "But tell me, has Agnes any suspicion? Is not the whole thing sudden?"

"Sudden!" It was the only word that escaped him; but the smile that played round his lips, as it was uttered, set about it all the suggestions of a little history.

"Edgar! I never suspected this!"

"And Agnes! Think you that she suspects that from boyhood she has been my lode-star? It is this that I want to know from you, dear Lady Bella; or, at least, you can tell me, I suppose, if she has other suitors."

"She has refused two wooers since we have been abroad; that is all I can tell you.

I thought her heart whole. I think—but no, I will not say that I have any opinion. You boys and girls are so calm and collected; we elders are so blind and so forgetful. How can we know any thing?"

"I choose to draw the honey of hope from your words," said Edgar, with a bright smile, and he continued: "Now, dear godmamma, for a great favour. Will you let me see Agnes? Will you let me learn my fate before she hears the bad news?"

"Yes," replied the lady, after a pause. "Yes; for I can divine your feelings and your reasons."

"You have discovered, then," replied Edgar, "that, though Agnes is without vanity, she has perhaps a little pride?"

"Yes, I have."

"Therefore there are moods and conditions of wooing to be considered, which might be needless with a self-satisfied girl."

"How came you to know so much?" cried his friend;

"'What woman taught you this?'"

"Love taught it me, as it teaches so much.

And, Lady Bella, may I say that I woo with your sanction?"

"Yes, yes. And do not hurry, or fear that I shall tell the bad news. You have gilt it with so bright a hope, that I can keep the secret cheerfully for days, if needs be."

"Best—darling friend."

"Would you like to see Agnes alone—unannounced?"

"Oh, yes, above all things."

"Then I will shew you the way to her studio," said Lady Isabella, rising, and opening the door. "Up that staircase—along the corridor—tap at the baize door at the end."

What behaviour this! Not according to the code, I am afraid, of a May Fair Chaperon's Manual of Observances. But, then, Lady Isabella Clinton was admitted to be an eccentric woman, with wider and more comprehensive views of life's realities than fit into the *régime* of a woman of fashion, or a woman "of the world."

Edgar Sutton was both morally and physically brave, but I believe it must be admitted that he paused for a full minute before that green baize door, as if he were gathering

together the requisite amount of some sort of courage. Even when he did knock, the tap was feeble, and had to be repeated, before a soft, calm voice responded,—

"*Avanti!*"

The use of the foreign idiom reminded him how little he was expected—how complete would be the surprise—how different the footing on which they were now meeting must be from that of former years! It was a momentary preparation for the recognition of many sorts of changes.

I think, as Edgar Sutton stood in the doorway, and Agnes turned round to greet her visitor, the momentary *pose* made a prettier picture than often springs to life on a painter's easel. Edgar saw at a glance that Agnes had developed from an interesting girl to a lovely woman. Nor had the triumph of the past few days been without its visible effect. It had given dignity and composure to her whole mien, without bestowing any of that restless elation which vain natures commonly betray at the faintest taste of worldly success. Rapid as was that first glance, it conveyed to the lover's heart a just measure of the mental expansion which could alone have caused such

a result. The surprise absolutely abashed him, for he had prepared himself to find her girlish bloom a little faded, and had not conjectured how mental development would illuminate such a countenance as hers.

But abashed for a moment, he was the next instant a little reassured by perceiving that Agnes lost something of her composure. Though she held out her hand frankly, as to an old friend, and her lips parted with a glad smile of welcome, the hand fluttered in his clinging grasp, and a flush spread over her face, which, receding, left her paler than before.

Ah, that love—which you remember was quieted, and swathed, and laid out like a corpse in the deep sepulchre of her heart! Was it indeed so little dead, so lightly entranced, that it could thus stretch out its arms at a look, or a word!

But the natural inquiries after absent friends gave time and occasion for Agnes to regain outward composure, and then The Picture, full in view, suggested discourse about itself.

Poets and painters are often accused of coveting praise, and dieting on adulation,

when, in reality, they are only craving sympathy in their emotions, and comprehension of their aims. Great, many-sided natures are always the richest in sympathy, and most ready in its bestowal: and perhaps there is hardly a subtler sign of littleness in a critic, than when, without a glow of enthusiasm for the merits of a work of art, he fixes his gaze persistently on its blemishes and shortcomings. Agnes had had experience of different sorts of critics, and, young as she was, had ceased to be gravely affected by dispraise, save from those who had capacities and habits of venerating and approving. But never had her heart leaped so eagerly for approval, as when he, whose brief remark had originated her work, stood before the visible elaboration of his idea.

Primal, Paradisal Love, is not content with partial sympathy. That Love which, escaping the triumphs of sin and death, still hovers about the world, and weary of wing, alights sometimes in faithful human hearts. No half comprehension of thoughts or desires will satisfy its yearnings, for it feels and sees thoroughly and intuitively. Not that there are not gradations of intensity in all its attributes

and belongings, but their divine order would often seem an inverted one to the dazzled slaves of the common mock-love.

They, whose "love" is a feast of petty passions and selfish personalities, could hardly have comprehended that white heat of the soul which made Edgar Sutton delay the words his heart had been ready to coin, that he might enjoy serenely the rich spiritual and mental sympathy that existed between himself and his beloved.

They talked—how they talked !—of art and the artist's Duty; of mourning Italy, chafing at her chains, and that White Cross of Savoy which the thoughtful could already see in the guise of a lifted banner. And having the faith of youth and the introvision of genius, which recognises its like, and can therefore justify its kindred, either as a nation or as individuals—they were able to prophecy. And, of course, they spoke of work—of labour in the great vineyard of the One Master.

"Ah!" exclaimed Agnes; "Ah! you understand my picture; you read my meaning more fully than I have expressed it. I feel as if standing tip-toe with outstretched arms, in all the eagerness of endeavour, I had still

only just touched upon—just indicated the things of which my heart is full."

"You feel thus," said Edgar, with a smile, "because you have acquired an admirable habit. You compare yourself and your doings with the mental stature and the mental prowess of the few art Titans."

"Of course; no meaner comparison is of any use. But I go farther: I have an ideal of art beyond anything which even they have reached."

"As they had also," he replied, "we may be very sure. If Raphael had not had a vision of an Eve-Mary, and a Redeeming God, and the adoring joy of the heavenly choir, far beyond anything he could show us, we should never have had the San Sisto Madonna."

"And," continued Agnes, "if Titian had not individualised men's characters to a degree that little people can but feebly comprehend, and if he had not seen with the spirit's eye some human face that was close to heaven, we should never have had his glorious Assumption."

"Ah, I have not seen that; I have not seen Venice."

"But go—pray go, as you return home.

Go, for two reasons, though I hardly know which reason to place first."

"Give me the reasons, and I can perhaps arrange them."

"Then," replied Agnes, "if art is your first attraction, go without delay. Go, before another year of the Tedeschi's barbarian neglect shall have done more harm to some of the greatest pictures in the world—before the damp that, for want of fuel, is suffered to roll down the walls, steals away for ever some subtle charm that was meant to lift and purify the soul. Go, before more palaces are despoiled of their treasures, and before the mournfulness of the place is too oppressive for the intellect to taste and enjoy the banquet that Venice spreads. And my other reason is, that a brave Englishman can, if he will, pass like a sunbeam through that enslaved province, bestowing counsel, scattering hope! Oh, my last reason I should have placed first!"

"Should you, Agnes? And because Love is a higher thing than knowledge—is that the reason?"

"Perhaps so;" and Agnes blushed as she spoke; "but love includes a great deal of

knowledge. I am sure in art it is so,—I never know what I do not love."

"Ah, Agnes!"

And, behold, the mystic chain was nearly complete. This talk of art, and labour, and life—of knowledge and love—what could it lead to, if not to the right moment for twining their rich and generous sympathies into the dear knot of personal acknowledged love!

As children with childish thoughts, and yet something of precocious sensibility, such as the poetic art nature usually displays, they had been attracted to each other, and had grown respectively stronger and gentler by the intercourse. As youth and maiden, standing on the threshold of life, they had felt a silken enthralment weaving about them like a web which gave its own colouring to all the aspects of existence. And now! separated by seas and mountains, for three long years, their souls had still moved parallel to each other, so that by the training and leading of far different circumstances, their true sympathies had deepened and widened. Theirs was not the love born of chance association and apparent suitability; but of the instinctive affinities which can only make their voices heard in

hearts unjaded by narrow teaching, and unpolluted by low desires.

For a full half hour, Edgar Sutton forgot the little speeches he had planned about mundane matters. Kneeling by Agnes Bendoran's side, after the "Yes" had been said,—that he might be near to those clustering curls, and lift them sometimes—that he might read more clearly all he asked to read on that dear face—no wonder the outer facts of fortune dwarfed themselves to such poor dimensions, that when they did obtrude on his memory, he smiled to think they could ever have seemed worth plotting or planning about.

"Ah! but I have something to tell you," he exclaimed; "my father has lost half his fortune, and I am going to work like a resolute man of business, to retrieve it."

"Oh, we will work together. I can make money, now; and I am not wholly portionless."

"Yes, we will work in the vineyard together; but, Agnes, I have to tell you that Lady Bella has also been plundered;" and as he spoke, an expression passed over his face, which startled Agnes. It was a look of trouble and regret, yet not unmixed with happier feelings.

"Lady Bella! Oh, what has she lost?" asked Agnes with emotion.

"My darling—just about what she had bestowed on you."

"And yet—and yet—they all consented to this!" exclaimed Agnes; and she burst into tears,—not of regret for the loss of fortune, but rather from a more full and ecstatic realization that it was herself—her very self—that was wooed and won.

Another hour and Lady Isabella stood beside her "children," as she loved to call them. Rapidly she understood all that had passed, and that there was no secret to keep.

"Was ever sweet and bitter so mingled before?" she exclaimed, her own April face struggling between smiles and tears. "But, Edgar, do have common sense, and tell me how I am to answer these horrid letters. Let me have some respect for you as a man of business, or I shall turn prudent, and tremble for the future."

"You shall see, Aunty, what I can do in the way of business, presently."

"Oh, I remember it used to be 'Aunty' when you wanted sugar-plums, twenty years ago!"

"And you always gave them. We want sugar-plums, of one sort or another, from those we love, all our lives; if that is the magic word, I won't forget it."

"I see you must be lured out of the studio," continued Lady Isabella, "if you are to be of any use to me. And there is your friend, Captain Rivingstone, neglected in the most selfish manner. You must tell him I can still give him a welcome and a dinner, and am not too broken-spirited by the bad news to have a pleasant project for the evening."

CHAPTER V.

IN THE COLISEUM.

"Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome."
BYRON.

"When these spaces filled with gazers, when this circle saw the strife,
Where the tiger and the Christian struggled wildly life for life." C. H. HITCHINGS.

"I HOPE, Captain Rivingstone," said Lady Isabella, when Arthur was introduced, "I hope we may consider each other old friends rather than new acquaintances. I assure you that you have long been well known to me by very affectionate report." Of course the young man responded cordially to such a greeting, and the hostess continued—"I believe I have the habit of assuming a semi-

maternal relation with the young people I like. Will you accept your position?"

"Most filially and gratefully, I assure you, dear madam," returned Rivingstone.

"Don't be vain of your privileges, Arthur," said Edgar, mirthfully; "it is your youth that admits you; Lady Isabella loves all young people."

"Do I?" cried the lady; "now, Edgar, you have just given the measure of your knowledge or ignorance concerning me and my likings. Ask Agnes."

Agnes shook her head, and smiled.

"Ah," resumed the hostess, "Agnes knows very well that I can be a savage to some sorts of young people; in fact, I do not know if it is not the prevalence of my antipathies in England which keeps me so much abroad."

"Do describe them," cried the young men, in a breath.

"Poor things! perhaps they cannot help being what they are," replied the lady, half relenting in her severity; "certainly they are the product of this reasoning, sceptical, satirical age. I think some of the iron which is so belaboured at now-a-days has got volatilized, and passes into the blood. One cannot even

amuse English children as one could when I was a child; too often they are dreadful little men and women. They know so much, and believe so little. Perhaps, as I said before, they cannot help it, neither can a monkey help being ugly."

"I perceive you are satirical, Lady Isabella," said Arthur.

"I hope not. If I thought I were sarcastic, I should give myself a mental flagellation. It is the scoffing, sneering, sarcastic spirit which in these latter years has prevailed so largely, that has helped to fade and wither the freshness of the youthful mind. What I love in youth is its trust, its frankness, its impulsive generosity, its unquestioning faith, and admiring worship. Where these are not, the lithest form and fairest face to me make only a *caput mortuum* of youth."

"I am afraid I have known mere children," exclaimed Edgar, "children carefully reared, who were neither frank and truthful, nor generous."

"Of course you have," replied the lady; "I have heard of a young girl of large expectations and extravagantly supplied with pocket-money, who lent an old governess five

pounds, and drew interest on the same. After such an instance, I am prepared to admit any authenticated case of juvenile meanness; but these exceptions to the general law of human life show, by the revolt they occasion our feelings, that they are abnormal and monstrous. However, age has paid its obeisance to youth to-day, I am sure."

"Age!" interrupted Edgar; "oh, Lady Isabella, you will never be old."

"That is to say, I shall never be wise," she replied, laughing.

"Nay, nay, you know better what I mean," said Edgar.

"I, for one," cried Arthur, "dare not make compliments in this presence; but I may speak the truth, and I know what Edgar means. Lady Isabella has retained all the best treasures of all the seasons through which she has passed, and living always in the van of the Age's Thought, she will have an Aurora light about her, even when her hair is like snow."

There was a glitter in her eyes as she put out her hand to Arthur, and exclaimed, "No more speeches, no more personalities, only I admit I am still romantic enough to have pro-

posed a romantic expedition for the evening. The moon is waning, and if we do not visit the Coliseum to-night, you birds of passage will not see one of the most soul-stirring sights in Rome."

"Ah, the Coliseum by moonlight, which Byron extolled, and all tourists think it a duty to behold," said Edgar; "it is very good of you to remind us of the opportunity."

"I have ordered the carriage between nine and ten," replied the lady; "it would be useless to go earlier."

"And when we return," said Agnes, joining now in the conversation, "you shall tell us how far you think Byron has sympathised with the spirit of the place."

"Are not you satisfied with his impressions?" asked Edgar.

"Not quite; but here comes Tonio to announce dinner, and I want you to see with your own eyes before we talk of what to me is an untiring wonder."

Three hours later, and our little party were standing in that battle-field arena which in the dark past was so often dyed by Christians' blood—life-drops of the soldiers of the Holy Army of Martyrs who were fighting the good

fight till the crown and the palm were won!

The waning moon was climbing a cloud-flecked sky, and clothing the noblest form in Rome in that silver gauze which makes a ruin of beauty still more lovely. For a long time the young Englishmen were far too much impressed by the majesty of the place to talk glibly, as one has known people do even at the "Coliseum by Moonlight."

When they first spoke it was to notice the tawdry trumpery with which Superstition has done its possible to mar the grandeur of the scene; the twelve wretched "Stazione," which reminding us in shape and size of Punch's moveable theatre, girdle that spacious area. Think of dolls and glass beads, of sign-board painting, and inches of looking-glass, in the place where, on a "Roman holiday," the men who came to die, "saluted Nero!" The place where the Holy Martyrs contended with fiercer and crueller enemies than the lions and tigers whose white fangs tore soul and body asunder; for here, at the last hour, they must have encountered the invisible tempters, those ghostly foes that try to make the spirit quail and shrink from the body's torture. And behold,

at the central spot, where fair round limbs were bound to the stake and charred with the fire, or torn apart by wild beasts, there rises a black gallows-like cross, which invites the kisses of the faithful, and having Judas-like power to ensnare, though not to kiss in return, promises the recompence of "indulgence!"*

"It is the culmination of mockery," exclaimed Arthur, with energy, as he read the well-known inscription; "this Romish reading of duty is surely the antithesis of theirs, whose sufferings it commemorates; theirs, whose imitation of Christ seems the closest of all human rendering. I declare I feel that it desecrates the sacred spot."

"Hush!" said Lady Isabella, "there is a figure kneeling on the other side, in the shadow; and though I think and feel as you do, we must be discreet in Rome, if we would avoid annoyance."

"It is hardly likely that the man understands English, is it?" exclaimed Rivingstone, deprecating the caution.

* "Baciando La Santa Croce si acquistano 200 giorni d' Indulgenza."

Inscription on the Cross in the Coliseum.

"No," returned Lady Isabella; "but you spoke with energy and gesticulation of manner; and one of the gifts of this many-gifted people, is the power of reading one's meaning with the smallest possible help from words."

"Are they so very clever?" said Arthur; "the world is accustomed to think of the modern Italians as an unpractical people, a nation of dreaming dilettanti and artists."

"Speak not profanely of the art nature," returned Lady Isabella, with animation, and touching Arthur's arm with a pat of mock anger; "believe me, the true art nature includes, as it overtops those 'practical' faculties which a busy world receives as the highest qualities it can appreciate; for the busy world, taken in the aggregate, is very apt unduly to value material things. And yet behold, in the right course of time the highest truth is vindicated! Da Vinci, for instance, was huge as a man of practical scientific genius, but it is as a glorious art creator that he is best remembered, just because art over-topped science, and included it within its shadow."

"This is rather a new doctrine, is it not, Lady Isabella?"

"Not new, I think, to thoughtful people; but rather fresh to the gregarious English mind. Yet our own Shakspere ought to have taught us better things. If he does not show us that faculties for lavishly revealing the practical wisdom of life, may be included in a grand art nature, I know not how we may be taught. And you must have observed that while Shakspere is the worshipped of poets, he is very often the one poet-favourite of prosy people."

"Oh, a genius of a century,—the very grand art nature may exercise this spell; but does your theory hold good with respect to the lesser luminaries?"

"I believe that it does; and that though some respectable degree of scientific attainments, or of practical capacity, may exist unallied to powers of imagination, there is a limit which, under such circumstances, is never passed. The smallest poetic art faculty is something added to, not set in opposition to the so-called practical abilities; that something which gives powers of expansion to the whole nature. Therefore is it that I see in

this dear Italian people the germs of all greatness; for they have as birth-right of their race that crowning power, which no training or education can give, but which when education comes within its reach, has something like the alchemist's desired spell for eliminating the purest wealth from everything. Remember, Captain Rivingstone, that you see Italy now prostrate, chained, and bleeding; nevertheless, they who study well the lineaments of the captive know its native strength and beauty."

"But would not Italy be free, if her sons were worthy of freedom? Pardon me, dear Lady Isabella, if I speak the thoughts familiar to calmer judges than I."

"Yes, calmer judges than you! People calm with the lethargy of ignorance. To think deeply, and to kindle with the glow of comprehension and the warmth of sympathy, is a labour to such persons; and, therefore, they ignore unsuccessful heroism, and the Promethean writhings of this never-subdued people. Why, a clear brain ought to measure the strength of the perpetual resistance of this nation by the weight of force that is necessary to keep it down. People who are un-

worthy of freedom wear their chains lightly, and in a few generations take them for anklets and bracelets of ornament. Not thus have Italians ever done. Through all the ages of oppression, never have they been willing bondsmen. As surely as time has brought round the vintage season and the harvest, so have there been cycles when patriots' blood was ripe for the bullet and the axe. And remember—a tyrant's policy is always that of Tarquin. The noblest stem is the one always to be felled; and yet, instead of this policy leaving the people leaderless, each sacrifice of a patriot has only kindled the martyr-spirit yet more warmly in uncounted breasts. Oh! my friend, you are young, you will surely live to see this people great and free."

"May it be so. And, perhaps, in this war on which England is now entering, we are serving the cause of freedom all over the world."

"Yes; and I tell you confidently, it will have consequences for Italy. In the first place, Sardinia will assuredly join England and France."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it; and that act will be

casting the dice at a great game. But see, Edgar and Agnes are already beginning the ascent, and my good friend the guide is getting impatient. He wants to show some of his torch-light effects in the dark recesses."

"There is our mysterious acquaintance, the Kneeler at the Cross," said Arthur; "he seems inclined to make himself one of our party, I think."

"Hardly so," replied Lady Isabella. "You will find him shrink from the fresh breeze which will certainly make itself felt when we are a little higher, even though he does wear an over-coat cloak fashion, with the arms dangling."

"Are these people so very tender of themselves?" said Arthur.

"Do not judge of that man as a specimen of the race I extol," answered the lady. "By his slouching gait, hardly less than by his adoration of that piece of painted wood, I know him to be one of a too numerous and yet not preponderating class; a class degraded by superstition, and pinched by poverty, till the faculties of body and mind are alike benumbed by semi-starvation. Bread for the body and the bread of life are given to such

only in crumbs: glow of health is not to be expected in such a man, any more than vigour of intellect, and rigid rectitude of thought. There—as I told you—he is making a round of the Stazione, kneeling at each of them. But look, Captain Rivingstone, look at that vista of arches; I wonder if it fascinates you as it fascinates me! Though I have stood here a score of times, and ought to know every line by heart, there seems to be always some new secret of beauty unfolding. Move only a few inches, and you will perceive what I mean."

By this time they had joined Edgar and Agnes, who, though keeping a little in advance, had scarcely been out of earshot. What a memorable evening it was to them! It is admitted that life—a human life the richest and most complete—has not wealth enough to afford many hours that can compare with the early time of happy acknowledged love; and just as the lonely negation of love makes all other negations of joy more bitter, so in noble natures does the realization of the heart's desire intensify all noble exercises of the mind. With Edgar and Agnes, thought was only more strongly winged, and fancy

more richly coloured, now that their hearts beat with the measured stroke of content.

"I am sure," said Agnes, after a happy pause, "I am sure that in these piled arches and wondrous circles a mystery of excellence is hidden, that makes them a Sybilline book to the true artist."

"And you, Agnes," replied the lover, "you, at least, know the language in which their lessons are written :—interpret for me, pray."

"Nay—you can read as clearly as I;—and indeed, your scientific knowledge should supply the complement to my deficiencies. I love making science a stair-way to art, and I remember you once said there were often points where rigid science and subtlest poetry met. I have often found your words true, and always thought of them when I have questioned this place."

"Dear Agnes, to remember so well!"

"I have remembered because the thought has so frequently been verified. No doubt, people very commonly study the dry facts of geometry and conic sections without seeing their life and inner beauty; and indolent people like and dislike, without troubling themselves to discover that mere form has

within itself a soul of expression. Now, Edgar, look down towards the arena from this upper gallery, and tell me what you see and what you think."

"I see the Loveliest Oval my eyes ever beheld. I think its line creates a shape of almost breathing beauty!"

"Ah, you are seeing what I see," replied Agnes, gleefully; "and I know you will follow my fancy a little further. Huge as these proportions are, they are so perfectly balanced, that we do not perceive a particle of the coarseness so often associated with gigantic size. As one ascends these receding tiers of stone, I feel like an insect climbing the cup of some wondrous fossil flower."

"Your fancy sets itself in my mind like a sharp seal."

"But you must follow out some other fancies of mine. I know it is the fashion to say these ruins only typify materialism. To me it is not so. To me, the Coliseum has rather the pathetic expression of restricted, arrested, spiritual force. I like to believe the legend, that it was designed by a Christian martyr, compelled to pagan service."

"Certainly," said Edgar, "certainly from

that lovely oval something should have sprung more gracious than these rounded Roman arches."

"But could not—instinct, as a pure oval always is, with life and growth. I think the oval always looks like a rigid circle, unlocked and set free. Yet let us admire these Roman arches as they deserve to be admired. How full of power; of still, but conscious strength they are! Each one would look fitly crowned by an Atlas: indeed, I can fancy there is an invisible weight that holds them down, and forbids their springing into the more ethereal pointed shape!"

"Your figure of Atlas will serve as well as any. Atlas must drop his globe, and behold it spinning through space, before he can straighten his shoulders, and lift his head to see heaven."

"Truly Paganism was an Atlas, that bore a world upon its shoulders," mused Agnes, thinking aloud.

"And if the Coliseum had been only a little lovelier, it must have been a Christian Temple, instead of a shamble for gladiators, and a death-scene for the Faithful."

"I think it is the completest emblem of

Paganism the world can shew—this great, broken-hearted ruin, with its dumb mysteries, and its stubborn strength; its imperfect beauty and struggling suggestiveness. Now, Edgar, do you see why I am not satisfied with Byron's mournful wail, that only falls and rises within one narrow octave, and touches no fuller chord than that which sobs his

'worship for the great of old,'

the Pagan Great, whose thoughts we have been seeking to disentangle from these tablets of stone?"

"Poor Byron! It is a difficult thing for our generation to realize the influence he undoubtedly exercised over our fathers. Let us console ourselves with the purer thoughts of the great poetess, who sings her hymn of triumph over that very wreck and ruin which Byron deplores."

"I remember," exclaimed Agnes; "you mean 'Pan is Dead.' What a soul-stirring thing it is—that requiem so to call it—over the gods of Greece!

'By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,
By our grand heroic guesses.
Through your falsehood at the True

We will weep not! Earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth;
And those debonaire romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run.
Look up, poets, to the sun!
Pan, Pan, is dead.'

Ah, I wish I had a better verbal memory, for this is surely the place in which to recite the whole poem."

As she finished speaking, Agnes leaned her elbow on the parapet, and rested her head on her hand. A soft cloud swept from before the moon, and the silver light streamed full on Agnes Bendoran's face. The breeze lifted her curls, and painted flickering shadows with them on her cheek; otherwise she was still, still as a statue; still, with that indefinable grace, which was one of her own especial characteristics. Edgar, too, was silent—not thinking altogether of art or the Coliseum; but lost in the delight of loving admiration, and fancying that it must have been some fair maid in the prime of her womanhood, thus

seen in the pale moonlight, who suggested the fables of Diana. And yet his thoughts were soon recalled from wandering fancies of heathen imagery, to feel how immeasurably more capable of true poetry was an English Woman's life, than all that the worshippers of Diana could have dreamed of even in an Endymion's slumber.

"Oh, that Philippa were here to-night!" exclaimed Agnes, breaking the silence; "but you have said there is a hope of her coming with your father and mother, next winter. What a joy it will be!"

"Yes, Agnes, if it really prove that Sutton must be closed for a year or two while we all retrench, and I pull at the oar of business. What better can they do than come here? But it is a long time to talk about; one knows not what may happen in a year."

"Whatever may *happen*, something must be *done*," replied Agnes. "At any rate, I must paint another picture, and earn my right to rest by diligent labour."

"One year, perhaps two, of separation, and separate labours. And then, Agnes—"

"And then,"—and as she repeated his words in a lower key, he took her hand.

Their fingers interlaced, and they both knew —with the knowledge that is deeper-rooted than are mere hopes and wishes—that, apart or together, their lives and labours were henceforth intertwined with still subtler, closer interweaving.

It must not be supposed that our little party were the only visitors at the Coliseum that memorable night. The customary number of sight-seers were enjoying the scene, with various emotions, and according to the measure of their receptive faculties.

A few were wakening the echoes and startling the owls, after an ordinary manner of nocturnal visitors; and the guide, finding the members of Lady Isabella's party especially able to take care of themselves, treated them with a little agreeable neglect. Indeed, they suffered group after group to pass them by, so that it happened that they, though they had been nearly the earliest arrivals, appeared at last the only remaining loiterers. Again, all was so still, that the scared owls returned to nestle in their secret nooks; and the moon, now mounted high in the heavens, shone so brilliantly, that the arena looked for

a moment like a silver shield, flung down by the Titans. But the brilliance of the light deepened the shadows; and, as the visitors descended the precipitous modern steps, and peered through the various archways, it seemed sometimes as if their vision were piercing the depths of Erebus.

They had nearly accomplished the descent, and the guide was quietly preparing his combustibles for one more torch-light display, when a figure, quickly recognised as that of the slouching stranger at the Cross, emerged from one of the dark galleries, and passing rapidly along, seemed for the instant to separate Arthur from his friends only by the accident of his sudden awkwardness. But such illusion was only momentary. In reality, however, Arthur Rivingstone's ready courtesy had saved him from a desperate peril. He had made way for the stranger more readily than could have been expected, and a dagger-thrust, that had been intended for his heart, only inflicted a slanting flesh-wound on his left arm.

The whole circumstance had occurred so rapidly, that a sudden exclamation from Ar-

thur, as he grasped the wounded arm with his right hand, was the first indication of the injury he had received. But the baffled assassin took instantly to flight; while the guide, too intent on kindling his torch to have observed what had happened, now lifted it in full blaze, so that for a moment the glare lighted up the countenance of the man as he half turned, making a vain snatch at the overcoat, which dropped from his shoulders in his haste. That moment was enough. Lady Isabella recognised him at once, as the same individual who had threatened and terrified her poor Caterina in the Cathedral of Santa Croce, three years before.

"Stop him! Stop him!" exclaimed Lady Isabella; and Edgar had not waited for such a command to commence the chase. But the assassin had all the advantage in the race. Evidently he was well acquainted with the locality, for he dived and darted through dark passages, till his track was lost, and it could not be known whether he had made a bold leap from some of the outside apertures, or accomplished his exit in a more regular manner. The French sentinel, when questioned, could throw no light on the sub-

ject. "So many people had been there," he said, "that he had not noticed how lately they had come out, or which way they had proceeded."

"Can it be," exclaimed Arthur, as he accepted the assistance of his friends in tying up his arm, "Can it be that the words I used to-night have provoked this deed?"

"No, Captain Rivingstone," said Lady Isabella. "No; I think there is some deeper reason for hate or revenge, though the whole horror is a mystery as yet."

"Hate or revenge!" sighed Arthur. "Never, consciously, did I injure any one."

"It is a sad misfortune that the wretch has escaped," continued Lady Isabella; "but, I suspect, he is no novice in crime."

"Surely justice will overtake him!" exclaimed Edgar.

"I am by no means sure of it," returned the lady. "Were it a liberal, preaching sedition against the government, or a patriot, distributing prohibited books among the people, whom the police were set to find, I doubt not they would do their work successfully. But, for a miscreant of this order, Rome is full of hiding-places. However, let

us be thankful the mischief is no worse; though we must knock up Dr. G. on our way home, to ascertain the exact extent of the injury."

CHAPTER VI.

FAITHFUL DISOBEDIENCE.

"But mine the love that will not tire."—TENNYSON.

IT was well that Lady Isabella had written her disagreeable business letters promptly. Had she left them for even a day, the variety and accumulation of her troubles might have disturbed the balance of her keen clear mind. As it was, the pecuniary disaster was a thing already put on one side. She had given her London solicitor ample instructions to act for her; and now she was able to devote her best energies to nursing Arthur Rivingstone, and exerting her influence to bring the would-be assassin to justice.

Arthur's wound proved rather more serious than it had at first been considered; or, perhaps, the mental fret, induced by the

delay of his journey to the East, and all the formalities necessary for obtaining prolonged leave from his regiment, aggravated the feverish symptoms, so that he remained quite an invalid for nearly a month. Lady Isabella persuaded him to accept the hospitality of her roof, instead of continuing at the hotel; so that, with skilful attendance and cheerful society, his sufferings were mitigated to the utmost extent.

Meanwhile, untiring exertions were made, through regular and irregular channels, to bring the criminal to justice, but without avail. A great stir was occasioned, it is true, and considerable fuss in taking the depositions of witnesses; and there had been created a sensation of excitement among the English and other foreign visitors, cards enough having been left at Lady Isabella's door to have built a little pasteboard Tower of Babel. Ready writers sent letters to the London newspapers—some of which were inserted to impress upon the English public a sense of the disorder prevailing under that government which was supposed to be made strong and steady by the steel of French bayonets. But, just at this time, with the great Russian

War looming upon us, and the *entente* between us and "our faithful ally" at its closest, the domestic policy of Italian cities, and the safety of English travellers therein, were by no means objects of paramount interest to English readers.

From the first, Lady Isabella had not been deceived in her expectations. Her momentary recognition of the assassin had convinced her that he was one of the degraded tools iniquitous governments find necessary for their deeds of darkness; and such social rats and reptiles have always safe crannies allowed them, into which they can creep, even when they have made a noise by doing a little dirty dangerous work on their own account. But, though not surprised at the failure of so-called "justice," she was not the less vexed and indignant. Not that Arthur Rivingstone himself, or his friends, had a vindictive desire to see the creature punished; but they eagerly required to trace the motive of his crime, and so perhaps find a clue to other mysteries.

It might be tiresome to read the letters Agnes wrote about this time both to Mrs. Sutton and Philippa, though the new rela-

tions on which they had entered made both writing and receiving them doubly sweet. And yet it may be worth while to glance at a paragraph in one of them—a paragraph penned with much more studied consideration than Agnes was in the habit of bestowing on her epistles. Amid all the happy satisfaction of her own heart, she did not forget the perilous trial through which her dear friend was passing, the price she was still paying for the one memorable hour's indulgence of her strong pride and stubborn womanly reserve. But Agnes likewise remembered the tacit understanding that existed between them—the understanding that she, at least, was never to be the first to name the one fateful subject—and yet her heart assured her that Philippa was prostrate in a lonely misery, prostrate with the hunger and thirst for closer intelligence about Arthur than any she was likely to gain from ordinary channels. Therefore it was that, with love and loyalty that dared to disobey, she wrote the sentences that could have but an ordinary sound to ordinary readers, but which, warmed by Philippa's heart, would come out with italicised meanings.

"One of the happinesses, dearest Phil," she wrote, "one of the happinesses of my new relation has been the privilege it has given me of playing something like a sister's part to Edgar's brother-like friend. The circumstance, too, of my having been close by Captain Rivingstone at the moment he received his hurt, may have strengthened the sort of right I have felt to be one of his nurses. He is ridiculously grateful for the little attentions we have been able to show him; for though brave as a lion, as becomes an English soldier, he seems to me to have one of those tender, affectionate, constant natures which are always made happier and stronger by female sympathy. Of course my mere presence recalled to him the scenes amid which he used to see me, and he has never wearied of talking of Sutton Court. He has half stolen, half begged, a sketch from my portfolio, which I suspect he values, because in two or three of the figures introduced I have been happy in catching the likenesses of my dear friends amid their own fair Sutton scenery. No doubt, directly he is able to travel with impunity, he will leave us for Malta, and I believe dear Lady Bella will

quite mourn over the departure of her newest pet, her 'soldier laddie,' as she calls him."

Let us admire the transparent veil of studied egotism which Agnes adopted to drape little facts the deeper meaning of which Philippa could not fail to extract. That she duly comprehended and appreciated them we may perhaps gather from some passages in her next letter to her friend, or sister, as she now declared she had the right to call her.

"My darling Agnes, how good, and wise, and womanly loyal you have been, to make the first breach in that wall which I built up between us! You must forgive military phrases, for somehow just now they are a vernacular with me. Did you dream what a poor craven was crouching on the other side of that same wall, unable to stand erect, though she still hugged a wretched ragged flag that she called her Pride! Well, you have set me on my feet again, and though I cannot say the flag is dropped, it droops often, if not always, as if the hand were loosening its hold. But, Agnes, how could I loose it quite, unless at the next instant I grasped—well, I will not write the short word that has as many letters as Life, and means its greatest

mystery. I could not stand for more than a moment so empty-handed. Sister, I know the words of your letter for ever, and for a day they lay so near my heart that my breathing rustled the paper, and so must have recalled them, could they have been forgotten. And then your letter was laid tenderly by the side of a poor four-years old flower, crushed out of shape, and faded, and dry. But there is a feeble sort of odour still clinging to my flower, which salutes me when I unlock its little temple, so that I feel my fetish is not quite without a soul. There; is not my flag trailing while I write thus?—But let it droop before—you! * * * * * And now, my sister, you will believe that the satisfaction and rejoicing which are reflected to me from your heart-happiness and art-triumphs are of no mean order. To own the truth, I was the only one of the family who had guessed Edgar's secret some time before he confided it to mamma, and I think my suspicion bound us together, if possible, more tenderly than ever. Ah, how I miss him! but I won't repine. As for Godfrey—and there is no use in concealing the fact—he is less one of us than ever. To be sure, he is seldom at

Sutton, more especially since half the house has been shut up and all gaieties abandoned, and since his known opposition to papa in politics lost him his election. But when he does come, if but for a three days' visit, I feel as if my nature were partially changed, biologized to the porcupine type, with quills perpetually erect. Alas! I fear my porcupine quills more often pierce the hands I love, than make themselves felt through Godfrey's gauntlet of self-esteem. Papa looks grave and vexed when we spar, but he cannot side with Godfrey, though he does not always understand how vague generalities can irritate me. Poor mamma left the room in tears one day when we were contending, and I had to rush after her to beg pardon for quarrelling in her presence, and console her as best I could. You see, both my parents have been shattered by these money losses, in a way we younger people hardly understand, except Godfrey, indeed, who is bitter on the subject of his father's imprudence, as he calls certain proceedings, and who stands up for his own well-secured rights, in a manner highly laudable in his own opinion. However, I have one ally, unacknowledged though he be. I am sure

grandpapa understands the personal sarcasms which lurk under Godfrey's general observations, almost as well as I do; and the other day, during one of our battles of words, he dropped a few phrases from my side of the argument, which shattered Godfrey's specious worldly theory of human life, as a bomb-shell might shatter a fabric of glass; and I noted, when I stooped over his chair to kiss him at night, he called me his right royal Queen Philippa. You remember, in the old days, it was ever to me a sign of his highest favour to be called Queen Philippa.

"Dearest Agnes, have I given you some notion of our state at Sutton? If so, you will think the plan of our going to Italy next winter a wise one. It *is* a desolating proceeding to curtail hospitalities and discharge servants, and live in the corner of a great house that used to be aired, and warmed, and lighted from end to end. Still, it is better to curtail these things than some others; and if we do go abroad in the winter, our dear old governess, Mrs. Chester, is coming to be here, to see that the school and the poor village people come to no harm in our absence. And meanwhile, we try to persuade ourselves,

and with tolerable success, that it is snug and sociable to use mamma's 'council-chamber' for a drawing-room, and to make one maid serve for both of us. Of course things must come right in time, but the more slowly, because Godfrey will make no sacrifices. * * * * * * I suppose you know Lady Isabella has written a long letter to mamma about you and Edgar. It is full of wise thoughts concerning the artist's life and character, and I am sure you might say, like the brilliant French-woman, 'D'abord je suis femme, avec les devoirs, les affections, les sentiments, d'une femme, et puis je suis artiste.' Ah, Agnes, it is not because I love you that I agree with Lady Bella's dictum that such as you are they who ennoble the families into which they enter. Do not you feel that there is a little throne erecting for you in our midst?"

CHAPTER VII.

FRIENDS IN ADVERSITY.

"Each lightly scattered seed takes root
Upon the teeming soil of time."
THEODOSIA TROLLOPE.

IT is four months later in that eventful year, and if we look in upon some old friends in England, we may gather and arrange several little facts which are closely associated with our narrative. First, however, we must make amends for culpable negligence, by chronicling a marriage of now quite ancient date.

The excellent Jackson and the faithful sprightly Julie have been "one" for nearly three years past,—one so much more literally than figuratively, that they only marvel how it was they did not think of marrying ten years before. And yet their courtship

was a very eccentric one. When Mrs. Blake, in her early days of widowhood, began to arrange her plans for the future, one of her first discoveries was that she could not afford to retain either a lady's maid or a man-servant. But both Jackson and Julie listened to her intimation of the fact, very much after the fashion of that famous domestic who declined to notice the dismissal he was in the habit of receiving daily from an irritable and impetuous master.

"They supposed they might stay for a few days longer, until they could find suitable situations—of course, without wages;"—and the few days grew into a few weeks, almost before any one had taken account of the time.

One day Julie was in the little back parlour, busy at some necessary needle-work, though from time to time she took out her handkerchief, to wipe away her quiet tears; and Jackson was at the sideboard, engaged, and, as it seemed to Julie, rather fussily, in rubbing and polishing a few forks and spoons.

"I wish you wouldn't," exclaimed Julie, with the interjectional snap of a little speech that is set between sobs.

"Wouldn't what?" replied Jackson, look-

ing up with surprise, and pausing in his task.

"I mean, I wish you wouldn't go on—go on"—(a sob)—"with things, just as if nothing had happened."

"Julie," replied Jackson,—and his voice had a ring of sadness in it, that sounded like a gentle rebuke,—"Julie, I might just as well say, don't be stitching as if your lady were going to a ball, and you had to prepare the finery."

"Does this look like finery?" exclaimed Julie, holding out, half-mournfully, half-scornfully, her plain sewing, for him to observe.

"I cannot say it does. Nor, Ma'amselle, does my rubbing up a fork or two for her poor little dinner, look much like the old times, or as if nothing had happened."

"*I* could do that for her, I am sure."

"I dare say you could," sighed Jackson.

"But *you* couldn't stitch for her and the children, as I can," continued the Frenchwoman.

"Of course I couldn't."

"What I mean is"—proceeded Julie—"that if she can only have one of us in *permanence*, it had better be me. I am sure, Mr. Jackson,

I don't wish you gone—you must know that; I should miss you dreadfully:—you are the only person in the world who understands what I feel and suffer for her, poor dear!"

"I believe," said Jackson, "that you love her almost as well as I loved my dear, dear master."

"I do," sobbed Julie; "she's got her faults, but she's been a good mistress to me; and as for her faults, I have helped to make them worse. I don't say I flattered her, because I still think she was a beautiful creature, —but I encouraged her extravagance—it wasn't all selfishness, Mr. Jackson, to get the left-off things, whatever you may think. I did like to see her look her best, and to hear of her being admired."

"I believe, Ma'amselle, as I said before, that you love her dearly."

"But I haven't been one of her real friends, Mr. Jackson; and now that I have grown wiser, I want to make some amends for the past. If I hadn't lent myself to the play-acting scheme, as I did, perhaps she never could have carried it out; and then, who knows how different everything might have been!"

"My good Julie, it is of no use recalling

the past;" and by this time Jackson had given over his polishing, and seated himself opposite to his companion—"though a great deal that you say, about being more useful to her than I can be, is perfectly true."

"You own it, then!"

"Yes: but you cannot tell how the mere thought of leaving her stabs me to the heart. Mind you, I am not sure that it is herself I care quite so much about; and, indeed, there was a time when I looked upon her almost as something evil, that had bewitched my poor dear master."

"*Fi donc! Fi donc!*—I am ashamed of you."

"Well, well, Julie; if I have not quite the same love for her as you feel, I have as much pity. And I know, better than you do, how *he* worshipped her. If ever a man set up a woman for an idol, he did, and perhaps he suffered for the sin. You don't know what he said to me in the latter times about her—I mean the times before the last seizure. 'Never mind my comforts, Jackson,' many a time has he said to me,—'only make your mistress feel the change as little as possible, and I shall think you have paid me a hundred-

fold for any kindness I may ever have shown you.'—Ma'amselle, in the still of the night I hear his voice saying such things to me, over and over again;—and when I go to sleep, the chances are I dream of her in a miserable sort of a home, with a slatternly drudge to wait upon her, to bring her food that she cannot eat, and to cross the grain of her temper in all sorts of ways. I know what the world is quite ready to say about such things—that after the great troubles she has known, she ought not to mind trifles; but really and truly, the course of one's daily life is made up of trifles, and with her taste and long habits of luxury—"

"I suppose, Mr. Jackson," interrupted Julie, "that in all your dreams, sleeping or waking, you have never dreamed that anyone else could have the same sort of feelings."

"Yes, Ma'amselle, I have. If you had only been a fair-weather friend, you, with your cleverness and experience, might have bettered your situation in life any time during the last twelvemonth. You don't know, Ma'amselle, how very truly and deeply I have grown to—to admire and respect you lately."

"That is as much as to say you did neither

formerly;" and the smile which the Frenchwoman forced was mocked by her tears.

"Don't be so hard upon me, Julie," replied Jackson, with a sigh. "It is only lately that I have understood you. You must remember in the old days how little we knew of each other: and I don't deny that I had my prejudices. You can hardly fancy what Mr. Blake's household was before his marriage from only knowing it afterwards. The fixed duties and regular liberality, and the sort of staid cheerfulness which prevailed, just suited the condition of a steady, middle-aged man like me. Now you, Ma'amselle, when you came among us, were young, and pretty, and smart, and saucy—yes, you were—and you seemed the right hand of her who had wrought all the changes. Then, you know, you did not speak English as you do now, till quite within the last few years—how could I know you—"

"Well, well, thank you, Mr. Jackson, for your long explanation; not that I can see how it should alter my opinion that you did not either admire or respect me. Don't try to qualify or explain any more. I like truth, even when it is spoken with English *brusquerie*.

Indeed you don't know how often I have been refreshed by your little frank speeches—though I had to get used to them—as people have to do with a shower-bath."

"Well, I am very glad you like the truth, even when it is disagreeable. I always thought that you considered me horridly unpolite."

"So I did, sometimes. And now, Mr. Jackson, that we have been so frank, and come to the understanding, the *en-rapport* with one another, let us talk again about *her*. My dreams have dreamed themselves into a little plan. I have saved some money. I should like to take a house, to have the milliner's shop below; up-stairs, the *appartement*, and Mrs. Blake and Miss Farrell for my lodgers. There, Mr. Jackson, have you anything better to propose?" And Julie laid aside her work, and plumped down her thimble on the table, with a gesture that was emphatic of resolution and a "fixed idea."

Jackson had started more than once while Julie was speaking, and now he tried to answer with more composure than he felt.

"Ah! that plan is excellent," he said; "at least it would be, if you were sure that you could still give time to her comforts."

"*Comment?* Why not?" interrupted the impetuous Julie.

"Well, you ought to know best; only it seems to me, with your millinery—for women cannot work like horses, or even like men—"

"Only they do, very often!" she exclaimed, again interrupting.

"If they do, they shouldn't: they weren't meant for it. However, what I was going to say—it is very curious—but I had thought of something the same sort of thing. I thought of taking a nice stationer's shop, in a proper situation, and getting Mrs. Blake to occupy the upper part of the house."

"Well, and if you did," replied Julie, almost pettishly, "you couldn't be her lady's maid."

"No, but I could take care that she had decent sort of attendance. And, to tell you the whole truth, I thought of making up old quarrels, and asking my sister to come and live with me, and keep my house."

"Your sister!" returned Julie scornfully. "I thought your sister had not the sweetest temper in the world! Excuse my English frankness, Mr. Jackson, but one must tell the truth to-day; and people say you ran away

from home when you were a boy, because your elder, only sister was a—what you call vixen."

"It is true," sighed Jackson; "but she is an elderly woman now, and may be gentler tempered."

"It is so likely that the *jeune fille*, having been a *diablesse*, the *vieille fille* should have become angelic! People's tempers, I suppose, like wine, improve with age."

"Experience ought to make people more forbearing to one another. However, Julie, we won't argue upon that point to-day. The thing is, what other woman could I ask to keep my house?"

"I really don't know all your acquaintances, Mr. Jackson," replied Julie, making an attempt to resume her needlework; "but I must say your plan seems preposterous, as compared with mine."

"Julie," he exclaimed, speaking as from a sudden impulse, and seizing her hand, which he clasped for a minute with his own brawny fingers—"Julie, will you promise me not to do anything, or say anything on this subject, until after this time to-morrow?"

"Why, if you wish it, I will," she replied,

seemingly astonished at his impetuosity; "one day more cannot make much difference."

The sagacious reader has, of course, divined the sudden thought which had taken possession of honest Jackson's mind; and it kept its hold, his purpose growing stronger and more determined, and at the same time taking a fairer shape, as he questioned and encouraged it. I am not going to betray the details of all that was said, and looked, and asked, and answered, within the next three days, by two worthy people of mature age and obscure station, who certainly had been brought to think of love and mutual suitability by their faithful devotion to another person. And yet it is a truth that when, in a very few weeks, they were united, the bride of thirty-five, and the bridegroom of fifty, began their married life with a sort of love, and an amount of love, that might often be envied by the young and the fair, the noble and the wealthy.

But they were married in the Great Exhibition year: and now we have arrived at 1854.

In one of the pleasant western suburbs of London, a certain good, old-fashioned house had submitted to something approaching a

metamorphosis. Well, Life, dear Life, is said to be sweet on almost any terms, and if houses are, as they sometimes seem, half sentient with the vitality they have absorbed, it might be better to consent to much cruel work from axe and saw, yet still to stand erect, than to be razed, and pulverised, and carted away in fragments to mend roads and light fires, as had been the fate of its contemporaries and companions. In that changed and "improving" neighbourhoood, it was only on terms of degradation that the dwelling, which was now the square corner house of a certain semi-pretentious row, was permitted to stand. Once the district had been a favourite country retreat for rich city people, and the choice wits and demi-fashionables of London. In those days houses were built slowly and substantially. Great gardens gathered together their wealth by degrees; and when minuets were danced instead of polkas, the pendulum of life wagged so leisurely, that even to muse over such times is like lotos-eating amid the whiz and whirl of our unresting to-day.

That corner house with the once surrounding garden, what ruffled and sworded beaux —what patched and powdered belles—had it

not sheltered! And to what chocolate-sipping and daylight card-playing could it not have testified! Let night keep its secrets about the heavier stakes, and the often replenished flagons.—And now the ground-floor is turned into a shop, or rather a double shop, having a bay window on each side of the door. The garden is cut through, to make wider a road along which omnibuses rattle every five minutes of the day, and the chip, chip, of the builder's chisel opposite might make even a blind man guess the sort of district into which he had entered.

One of the shop windows is occupied by gaily-bound books, fancy note-paper, envelope-cases, paint-boxes, and similar ware; while the other is devoted to some bewitching bonnets, head-dresses, and fairy-like wreaths. If you peep in at the open door, you will see in the centre of the intervening space the flags of England and France, leaning lovingly together—an arrangement improvised by Madame Jackson, by means of strips of her millinery ware, the day after the alliance of England and France was officially announced. You see, Julie had her little bit of sentiment about her English husband, though for wisest business reasons she was called "Madame," instead of "Mrs." Jackson.

We, however—in thought—glide in at the private door, pass up the neatly-carpeted stairs, and observe the occupants of the pleasant, cheerful room which extends over the entire space of the double shop. We recognise a few inanimate old acquaintances—such as Mrs. Blake's rosewood escritoire, its morocco looking a little the worse for wear—and a pretty work-table, whose *marqueterie* used to be greatly admired by the *cognoscenti*. But the principal furniture of the apartment is simple, though substantial, and in that sort of good taste with the style of the room, that every little work of art—and it contained several—seemed harmoniously placed. The full, fresh white curtains fluttered in the summer breeze, and the two balconies, filled with healthy, flowering plants, veiled the room perfectly from the gaze of passers-by. The old house did not boast of folding doors, but it had something much better;—its thick partition walls admitted of double doors—the great luxury of good houses—so that the next apartment, fitted up as a dining-room, had facilities for keeping within bounds its mysteries of sound and smell.

A third, and still inner room, also ap-

proached through double doors, completed the suite, and was considered Millie Farrell's sanctum. Cool in summer, and warm in winter, and always fresh and quiet, that little room was certainly a good influence in her life. Its one window looked out on what remained of the old garden, and at the back of the house something like a goodly portion of it had been saved. An old, old mulberry tree, whose immediate progenitor had been planted by Evelyn, lifted its silky, serrated leaves for canopy over a portion of the lawn, and though the tree had been blasted by lightning, it showed its dead side only to the north wind; and in due season dropped its wealth in answer to the sunshine, often as if in the gratefulness of its being it showered down red wine as well as purple fruit. Somehow to Millie Farrell that old mulberry-tree was the most "talking" tree she had ever known; but then, in these latter times Millie had grown far more than before into companionship with nature.

A shapely bay tree also glimmered within sight of her window, and a cedar drooped its dark fringes to the grass, and looked as if its pagoda-like outlines might have suggested the

quaint summer-house so near, and which only needed a joss of some sort to pass for a miniature Chinese temple. Oh, those dear, dear old gardens, with their mossy turf and adamantine paths, and luscious fruits and sweet-smelling flowers, and patriarchal trees! The gardens which take generations to grow—gardens where the insects hum all sorts of truths and traditions, and which cannot—is it wicked to be glad?—which cannot be created as swiftly as workmen knock together a Crystal Palace.

It would be difficult to say what made Millie's little study such a peaceful, cheerful room, unless it was that the garden gave it that character. There are people who would have called it dull, and been moped sitting there; but then, I suppose, these lovers of street sights and town clamour have never learnt the true language of trees and flowers and rippling water—never have given themselves quiet enough to hear the still, sweet voices that only speak when eyes and ears are permitted calm.

Millie had had rather a crooning, than a working morning. She had been crooning over the last pages of a rather important work,

which was already in the press, and some proof sheets of which she held in her hand, as she passed into the front room, where Mrs. Blake was seated. For latterly she had fallen into the habit of shewing her proofs to her aunt, whom she found none the less a keen critic, because there had been during the last year or two an evident *rapprochement* of their sympathies. The widow no longer wears the disfiguring "weeds," but whenever she has thought about returning to colours, it has been to decide that she will never again adopt them. In her simple black silk dress, and matronly cap, she is a very different-looking person from the Mrs. Blake of Curzon Street; but though she shows her age without effort to disguise it, and pretends not to style or fashion, she has acquired, or developed, a certain charming quality, which had never in the old times been remarked about her.

She had got rid of her fretful anxiety about worldly appearance and the world's opinion; in its place she had, for the first time in her life, lighted up the lamp of Faith and Peace; and it was the halo that proceeded thence which wrought the change. When Millie entered the room, Clarissa, now a well-grown

girl of twelve years old, was practising a sonata on the piano, her mother's cultivated ear detecting and correcting now and then a fault, though she was engaged at the window, cutting and trimming some of her plants.

"Oh, here is your cousin coming to us," exclaimed Mrs. Blake, speaking to the child, "so you may leave off for to-day."

"Then shall I go down stairs to see Julie?" replied the little girl. "Dolly is to have a lovely new bonnet this afternoon."

"Clarry, you are quite spoilt down stairs; and I wish you would say, Madame Jackson. Little girls ought to be respectful."

"Oh, mamma, she doesn't mind."

"My dear, that is not the question."

"But, mamma, may I go—because of the bonnet?"

"Yes, you may go, if you promise not to be troublesome, and to come back if Madame is engaged; but, Clarry, you are really a great girl to be still dressing a doll."

Clarry ran away laughing, and her mother smiled too. They had both caught the joke of her being a "little" girl and a "great" girl almost in a breath.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORNING VISITORS.

"Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots! accessible
Alone to heavenly dews."

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

"MILLIE," said Mrs. Blake, after the proof sheet had been duly discussed, "I wonder if literary tastes and habits are at all contagious! Not, mind you, that I shall ever be so rash as to attempt writing a book, but I begin to understand your habits of thought and observation. I found myself musing this morning about the changes that are going on in this neighbourhood—changes I can even remark from these windows—till I startled myself with the thought that I was weaving

fancies, and finding similes for myself, just as you do in your writings."

"Pray, dear aunt, give me the benefit of your fancies and similes," said Millie, with a smile.

"Why, I find myself watching with positive interest the progress of the building opposite. Only the other day there were the old houses standing; then we saw the ground encumbered with rubbish, and for a little while had glimpses of the open country beyond; but, already, we may judge of the size and shape of the new tenements. New I call them, and new they are, though I believe they are built on the old foundations, and I know that some of the old bricks are mortared into the walls."

"I did not think you observed such things," said Millie, gaily.

"Ah, since my eyes began to weary with work or reading, I have often been obliged to lay down my task or my book—so I have some excuse for this idle gazing from the window; and I have grown to fancy that some human beings are as different from their former selves as these new houses are from their predecessors. Myself, for in-

stance. I often almost start, and ask myself if I am awake or dreaming—if I am really Clara Blake, living with something very like content, yet leading a life which, had I seen it as a possibility five years ago, I should have thought of with a shudder of dread."

"Aunt, I call these thoughts rather a proof of introspection than of idle purposeless gazing from the window. But," added Millie, laughing, "I can give you, if you like, a lesson which I fancy literary people have to learn very often. Rarely have I piqued myself on an original idea, but within a month I have found some one else had thought pretty nearly the same thought, perhaps expressed it before I was born; and, aunt, only a week ago I read, somewhere, the remark that no two people differ more completely from one another, than may the same individual differ from himself at different periods of his life. This is something like the truth at which you have arrived, is it not?"

"Yes, Millie, it is; and I shall respect my thought all the more because somebody wiser than myself thought it before me. You don't know how I used to dread growing old; and here I am, with my hair turning grey, and

taking to spectacles, and not caring who knows such facts. I wonder, if your poor uncle had lived, whether I should have cared then."

"No, aunt, I don't think you would—nor he either."

"If he had lived a few years longer," said the widow, with a sigh, "how very, very happy we might have been! If he had seen me contented, I know he would have borne poverty without a murmur."

"But, you see, dear aunt, that was not God's way of bringing us to the light. I have had my struggles, and made my mistakes also, though they were of a different kind from yours; and there is not a truth I see more clearly than that God works on every human soul in His own unexpected and unexampled manner. If you knew how very strange it was that I should ever have known Mr. Serle, if you saw how links of evil were overruled and twisted into strong chains of good—"

"And what an influence he has been in my life!" interrupted Mrs. Blake.

"There have been many influences at work," said Millie, "to reconcile you to the changes you have known; and, certainly,

Mr. Serle's teaching, and his personal acquaintance, have been among them."

"I declare," continued Mrs. Blake, "when I think over the little interweaving chains of circumstances, looking so slight and feeble when they first shew themselves about our lives, yet in reality binding our being to inevitable results—I declare, when I reflect on such things, I feel my mind almost overcome by the realization of what I call the great Unutterable Truth."

"You mean the reconcilement of Predestination and Free Will. Well, I suppose the human mind can only grasp that truth by snatches and flashes. But, then, these make a memory, to serve us in darker times."

"Just so. Those who have made acquaintance with the stars on bright winter nights know where they are, though the clouds intervene. The darkest night is not to them the darkness of the blind."

Does it seem strange that Millie Farrell and her aunt should have glided thus quickly and easily into grave talk on gravest subjects? I hope not. There are people—good sort of people, too, sometimes, in their way—to whom one must talk only of trifles,

or else in manner mount the rostrum, and preach or declaim. But it is a large grain among the elements of domestic enjoyment, when, with our home associates, we can break into thoughtful discourse, *sans* preface or apology—taking, as it were, a rapid refreshing bath together in bright waters, amid the dusty work of the world.

However, the present grave discourse was not much extended. A double knock at the private door was the signal of visitors; and the next minute Jackson himself, with all the old manner—the staid, respectful air of the servant "out of livery"—announced "Mrs. and Miss Sutton."

In the old Curzon Street days Mrs. Sutton and Mrs. Blake had been visiting acquaintances. Now, they were really friends; and, of course, the engagement of their children had drawn the tie between themselves still closer. With a rare delicacy, and at Edgar's persistent request, Lady Isabella's losses, and, consequently, the change in the position of Agnes, had been represented to Mrs. Blake in the fairest colours which were consistent with truth. All the brightest rays of hope, as to a final favourable adjustment of

the affair, had been suffered to fall on it with undiminished brilliance; and Mrs. Blake had received her last quarter's income without realizing that it probably represented a certain amount of her daughter's labour.

The many cares which had fallen on Mrs. Sutton had aged her perceptibly. Her husband's broken health, his pecuniary losses, and a certain vague terror that Godfrey had secrets and mysteries caverned from her knowledge, were indeed enough to sadden her. And yet a truly noble nature always carries its burthens of grief with a certain sort of grace; and it was a truth that those who best knew and best loved Mrs. Sutton thought her more admirable and more loveable in these times of trial than even formerly. Philippa and Edgar both found her so, and both loved her with a love that was worshipful, in the full meaning of that fine old word. And yet Philippa had a secret reserved from her mother, as we know—that secret which it appears a woman's mystery of modesty to hide—and which, assuredly, not Agnes even would have shared, but for a sort of strange necessity, and opportuneness of occasion.

"Edgar is wishing very much to come and see you again," said Mrs. Sutton, after some other topics had been discussed; "but he is so absorbed by business of one sort or another, that he can only pay evening visits."

"I am sure he knows how charmed I shall be to see him," replied Mrs. Blake; "the last evening he came was one of great enjoyment both to Millie and me. Really he gave us such a vivid description of his doings in Italy, that I almost fancied myself there; and certainly I have ever since realized the life Agnes has been leading, far more completely than I ever did from her letters."

"That I can easily fancy," said Philippa, with a smile; "Agnes always writes so calmly and humbly about herself, that only by inference can we judge from her letters of the position which she really holds among artists."

"You are right, my dear," replied Mrs. Blake, "though, indeed, I often used to think Agnes put too low an estimate on herself, and that, according to the worldly maxim, she would ever be taken at her own valuation; and yet, knowing her peculiarity, you see even I myself did not make sufficient allowance for it."

"I fancy it must be one of the most diffi-

cult things in the world," interposed Millie, "for a parent to have a true estimate of a child's character and talents. I think if I had had children, my love would certainly have exaggerated all my hopes and fears concerning them. But as it is," she continued, gaily, "I take the old maid's privilege of propounding theories concerning education."

"Old maid!" exclaimed Mrs. Sutton, with a smile.

"Oh, yes," returned Mrs. Blake, "Millie considers herself enrolled."

"I don't think it," continued the visitor; and Mrs. Sutton spoke without any dash of the flippant vulgarity so often associated with the topic of matrimony.

"There, Miss Farrell!" cried Philippa, "do you know mamma is a prophet on such subjects?"

"Is she?—Then I suppose I must bow to my destiny—*che sara sara*. Only I do assure you if a love-potion were placed at my disposal, I should not know to whom to administer it."

This was truth—Millie Farrell always spoke the truth—and she was not constrained to add that in her varied life she might have

had her false auroras, cold and bright, and, happily, almost as swiftly passing away as those northern lights that have nothing to do with morning.

"Edgar told me to mention," said Mrs. Sutton, reverting again to her son, "how glad he was to have happened to meet Mr. Pennington here. He was so struck with the shrewdness of your friend's observations, and he had so often heard of the high honour of his character, that he determined to consult him professionally. The result has been, that he has placed in his hands all the documents concerning Captain Rivingstone's affair, and, in fact, has intrusted him with guarding the interests of our friend. The old Lord Rivingstone is content that it should be so. Poor old man! I do not think he will ever see his grandson again. He seems feebler every day, life hanging as it were by a thread, as if ready to pass away by a touch, like a withered leaf in autumn."

"There is a strange history of disputed succession connected with Captain Rivingstone's family, is there not?"

"Yes; but I think I know it now well enough to tell it to you briefly and clearly."

"Pray do," said Mrs. Blake; "it is true I know very little of Captain Rivingstone, but I thought him a very interesting young man."

"We are all very fond of him, and you know he is Edgar's choicest friend. Well, the family history is this: when, about forty years ago, the present lord came to the title—himself succeeding an aged grandfather—he found his rights unexpectedly contested by a man whom he had known slightly as a disreputable, illegitimate connection of the family. This individual had been permitted to bear the family name, as a sort of covering for disgrace; but now he came forward with documents that pretended his parents had been married, and that he, being the child of the lately deceased lord's elder son, was really entitled to rank and possessions, the hitherto acknowledged heir being descended from the younger of the two sons. The affair made a great stir at the time, and was, in fact, quite a *cause celèbre;* but the trial ended in the utter defeat of the false claimant, and the establishment of the present lord in his rights."

"Then how can any one, after this lapse of time, possibly re-open the question?" asked

Mrs, Blake; "but from what I hear, this seems to be expected."

"Because the new claimant, son of the former one, and a yet more worthless creature, professes to have found the register of the marriage in England, which had been wanting before, for the judges were not satisfied with feeble evidence about a supposed marriage at Florence between a beautiful opera-dancer and the heir to a peerage. There is great villany at work somewhere. The poor old lord has assured Edgar that *his* father received the solemn asseverations of his brother that he never had married the woman in question."

"But as this false claimant has not positively come forward, how has the thing got so talked about?" inquired Mrs. Blake.

"By the indiscretion of another rogue, who, as it appears, being aware of what was intended at the old lord's death, tried to make money of his knowledge, but being treated with contempt, and very nearly kicked down stairs, I believe, by Arthur, he revenged himself by talking openly of what would happen, and declaring that Arthur would never succeed to the title. There is something to me

quite pathetic in the position of Captain Rivingstone, away in the Crimea serving his country, while such plots are hatching at home."

"And then the injury he met with in Rome; really he seems destined to strange, painful adventures. Yes, it is very warm," continued Mrs. Blake, observing that Philippa had moved nearer to the open window, and was stooping as if to admire the flowers; "let me open the sash higher, and give you more air."

"Thank you, thank you; but perhaps you are afraid of the draught. What a lovely fuchsia you have. I came to admire it more closely;" and as Philippa spoke she stooped over the plant and gently rested one of the crimson bells upon her gloved hand. It was not a politic action under the circumstances, but no one happened to notice the trembling of her fingers.

"Yes, it is of a beautiful kind," replied Mrs. Blake, who was always pleased to have her flowers appreciated. "But don't you recognize it? It was a slip from one you gave Agnes years ago."

"Ah, yes, I remember, we have some just

like it at Sutton," said Philippa, still turning her face from the room. She was glad of any babble, any occasion, that could serve to conceal the evidence of her emotion. Why was it that this talk about Arthur Rivingstone so stirred her pulses, and made memory and imagination busy with their pictures? Once her word, her will, might have decided the yes or no of his entering the army; yet supposing, as is likely, that among loving confessions she would still have set that martial "yes," how jewel-like would it have looked, when compared with the hard, stony word of command she had made it!

Oh, to have been his wife now, or, at least, his openly betrothed, so that her cheek might have had the right to flush, her eyes to glisten, when his name was mentioned; so that her pride—which had so often proved her trouble—might now make recompense, and lend her strength, so that she might step in sisterhood among the band of loyal Englishwomen who had sent forth their best and dearest, to do their country's bidding; and who, if they bore inevitable agony, at least shared the glory of heroism. But she—and very womanly women have quite a faculty for

making such arrangements—she had contrived for herself all the pains and penalties of a deep affection, without having garnered its joys, or gathered up its sustaining forces.

There were times when Philippa would have found it difficult to answer her own heart clearly, and to say precisely what roads to happiness she wished to open in her path. Her calm judgment was always a magnanimous one, but there had been moments of bitter anguish, in which she had almost wished that Arthur Rivingstone might lose title and estates; that somehow, in the order of time and events, the hour might come when she should be able to prove, with larger measure than simple confession, that love which her pride had once all but denied. The better mood, however, was always the prevailing one; and if Philippa had possessed some fairy gift, by which to map out Arthur's destiny, the chart would have been a dazzling blazonry of unalloyed successes; not forgetting the soldier's glory, without the soldier's all-likely pains.

Ah, it is well that even the best of human friends, and the truest of human hearts, have no such fairy gifts! "God's actual," as a

wise writer says, "must always be better than man's possible;" and we may be very sure that the dark-tinted life-chart, from which we shrink as it unrolls, is more fitted to our needs than the brightest we ourselves could design; always supposing that the chart drawn by the Divine Hand has not been blurred and blotted by our own rebellion.

Two minutes spent in admiring fuchsias and geraniums were sufficient to restore Philippa Sutton to outward composure. That sudden allusion to Arthur's danger and hurt at Rome, had been like the first sharp touch of a surgeon's lancet. Now that the wound was bared, she could endure quietly, and even not start when Mrs. Blake again reverted to the assassin's attempt, saying,

"Now that I know the story better, I cannot help believing that that dagger-thrust had something to do with it. I can conceive how such a villanous scheme would be facilitated by Captain Rivingstone's death."

"Of course that thought has occurred to us all," said Mrs. Sutton; "and really, if a murderer's knife is to be brought into play, we may consider our friend rather safer before Sevastopol than anywhere else."

And then the conversation glided to various homely topics, and finally became so very womanish, that Mrs. Blake rang the bell, and when the neat housemaid appeared, she was required to ask Madame Jackson "if she would be so kind as to send up some of her prettiest bonnets for Mrs. and Miss Sutton to try on?"

As was expected, Julie came up herself, with a whole tree of bonnets in her hand, and followed by an assistant, with a creaking, black-covered millinery basket; and as Julie propounded in autocratic fashion what would, and what would not, suit the mother and the daughter, she, with real enjoyment of her business, pinned the strings of a *chapeau*, that was pronounced *tout-a-fait ravissant*, beneath Philippa's chin. Perhaps she did regard the blush rose-buds which she arranged against Philippa's dark hair more narrowly than the warm cheek towards which they leaned; but that young face was now so governed, that a far closer observer of character than was Madame Julie Jackson would have failed to trace the emotions which had risen and rippled over it so lately.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WISDOM OF THE SERPENT—THE HARMLESSNESS OF THE DOVE.

"Why Love does all that's noble here below."
DRYDEN.

WHETHER character be the more influential in controlling circumstances, or circumstances in moulding character, is about as knotty a question as any that would-be debaters can select as a whetstone of their oratorical powers. If the famous Gordian knot had remained uncut, perhaps some patient human fingers might have been found to untwist it at last, provided it had not been subjected to the petrifying power of certain mineral waters. If it had been so treated, it would have needed a heavier weapon than the sword to rend it. Now there are ravelled questions

which perhaps in the Garden of Eden were soft and silken knots, but which are now so petrified by the waters which flow outside of paradise, that the subtlest powers of the mind fail to loosen their convolutions. We may strike out sparks of thought by attacking them, and heat and light are certainly peerless among precious things; but the mystery of the interweaving remains sealed to us for ever.

How far Clara Blake's character had shaped her destiny, and how far the vicissitudes of her life had moulded her character, made up the knot, which even Millie Farrell, who knew her so well, failed to unravel. She only saw that the overruling Hand had welded together all things for good, and had treated her as a child that was worthy of punishment and purification. It seemed a sort of destiny that Millie was to reverence her aunt, for we remember, in the early days of their intercourse, the admiration which Mrs. Blake excited in her mind; and now that Millie had ceased to be dazzled by externals, something much deeper and warmer replaced the old homage —a something in which gratitude was an element, for Mrs. Blake had been generous and

affectionate to Millie through some later matter-of-fact troubles.

It would hardly be possible to exaggerate the change there had been in Mrs. Blake's manner of life; yet if we set aside the rude shocks which had preceded her husband's death as things apart, she had glided into differences of daily habits, almost as imperceptibly as we glide, hour by hour, from youth to age. True friends had winnowed from among the thistle-down of mere summer-day acquaintances, without effort or entreaty: worldly pleasures had found their waxen masks melt before the white heat of a great sorrow; and having shown their shrivelled fronts for a moment, had slipped well nigh out of sight. Change of scene had necessitated change of habits; for so small a matter as altering one's dinner-hour may loosen a mass of old customs, and set it gliding away like an avalanche; and late as she was in making her discoveries, Clara had at last obtained glimpses of what were the rock truths, the immutable realities, of life. Although she was now nearly mid-way between forty and fifty, she had done more to educate her mind within the last three years than at any previous period, and

her general mental development had shewn various unexpected results. One little discovery astonished herself very much; that her powers of musical expression were enhanced, although for twenty years she had never, in the same space of time, played and practised so little, was a fact beyond dispute.

It was quite true that Wilberforce Serle had been a great influence in her life; for, independently of his preaching, personal intercourse with him had in a great measure directed her reading; and when people read more hours a week than they pass in society, books shape them more than does the world. Then the difference in their age—for she might almost have been his mother—gave a certain affectionateness to their intercourse, and completed just that reciprocity of respect, which is so capital a cement of friendship.

It was one afternoon, a few days after Mrs. Sutton's visit, that Mr. Serle called, as he was wont to do, at least once in every two or three weeks. Millie was out, with Clarry for a companion, so that Mrs. Blake was alone when her visitor was announced; and, as she rose to receive him, she laid down a little book she had been reading, placing her spec-

tacles between the leaves, for "old woman's book-marker," as she called them.

"I don't know how to acknowledge my last obligation," she exclaimed, after the ordinary greeting and mutual inquiries had been made; and, glancing at the book on the table, as she spoke—"the reading 'In Memoriam' is a new experience for the mind; yet I feel I can only talk about it by metaphors and similes."

"I am so very glad you are not disappointed," replied Mr. Serle. "When I spoke of it the other day, I felt persuaded you would recognise that this production of Tennyson has created an era in English literature."

"Yes, and how bright a one! This book is to me like the unsealing of a fountain, or like what I should think fine organ-playing must seem, when first heard by the blind."

"You play the organ, do you not?" exclaimed Mr. Serle, without waiting clearly to track the thought which had led him to ask the question.

"Only a little. I once had an object in trying to play"—and Mrs. Blake's memory reverted to the days of her first widowhood,

when she had thought of adding to her little income by becoming an organist. "Only a little," she replied; "but, latterly, I have sometimes fancied that if I had devoted myself to the organ, it might have been my instrument, rather than the piano. I used not to think so, I know, but I do now."

"I can fancy you are right."

"While reading 'In Memoriam,' I have felt reminded of our grand Gothic Cathedrals, and have longed to be in one of them, with the privilege of the organ-loft, and permission to improvise chords till I found harmonies to suit me."

"In default of the Cathedral," said Mr. Serle, with a smile, "would not St. ——'s answer your purpose? I am sure our organist would give you the *entrée* sometimes."

"How kind of you to think of such a thing! It would indeed be a pleasure to me."

And then the conversation glided on to the interchange of thought on various books, both old and new, until Mr. Serle observed—

"You know my opinion of the mischief

that comes of the modern bad habit of desultory reading."

"I am sure you are right; and yet many people say that the fugitive literature, which is now so abundant, appeals only to the class who would not read at all if they were not thus provided for."

"I wish I could think so," returned Mr. Serle. "I wish I did not know that many people who love reading well enough to make books a necessity of existence, yet yield to the temptation so thrust in their way, and confuse their minds as if with opiates; stultifying their intelligence by the perpetual wandering from subject to subject, which, after all, they rarely find other than partially or superficially treated."

"And yet, what a show of knowledge is made sometimes, on the strength of this sort of reading," said Clara, who had a half tender recollection of her own obligations to "desultory reading."

"A show of knowledge," replied her companion; "yes, 'show' is the right word. Cut flowers make a charming show for a day or two; but it is not often we find a piece of vital root, or a matured seed pod, entangled among them."

"Ah! Mr. Serle, you are not old enough to remember the ante-Tennyson days," continued Clara, reverting once more to 'In Memoriam,' "when it was popularly supposed that Byron had added the last possible string to the British lyre, and played upon it every melody of which the instrument was capable."

"And yet Wordsworth was living!—but, I suppose, singing so like a lark 'at heaven's gate,' that the multitude could not hear him."

"Just so. You young people, not yet out of the twenties, cannot easily imagine what the Byron influence really was. It caught up our parents in their prime, and then coiled around us, with a vastly increased impetus. When one's mother knew the 'Corsair' and 'Giaour' by heart, and fringed her long letters with gloomy aphorisms from 'Childe Harold;' and when one's father, in his daily talk, quoted 'Don Juan' as the text-book of moral philosophy, what could be expected of impressionable youth?"

"Certainly nothing but what occurred; a loosening of principles, a fanning of the passions, and a deepening of universal discontent."

"I shall take care to keep Byron out of my Clarry's way," observed Mrs. Blake.

"I do not think, my dear lady, you need take the trouble. I am of opinion that Byron's magic wand is broken, and buried five fathoms deep. Or, rather, I should say, the serpent of Egypt has been devoured by that of the Lawgiver. The Byron virus fails to act on the adolescents of to-day. It required the condition of congenial surroundings; those failing, it is innocuous, and young people now smile at the enthusiasm of their grandfathers. Certainly, the moral atmosphere has so far purified that we do not acknowledge a breach of the Decalogue as heroism; therefore, our young men and women are not fascinated by the 'Giaour' and 'Corsair,' especially as there are later love poems, richer than Byron's in imagery and power, and of purity unchallenged."

"And yet there were such poems before Byron. Tell me, Mr. Serle, how it was we neglected our old poets as we did when Byron was the rage?"

"Byron was the rhythmical exponent of the actual mind of the period,—that was the secret of his power: the exponent of a faith-

less, unhappy, selfish, yet eager age, when more than at any other period in English history, as it seems to me, the children were suffering for the sins of their fathers, and all society upheaving in one restless mass."

"Certainly there is much in the circumstances of to-day for which the young should be very grateful."

"Yes; but we may be very sure that their generation will have its own peculiar trials and temptations. The Prince of Darkness is rich in strongholds, and is never more dangerous than when fighting from a masked battery. This is why I would have every question freely discussed," continued Mr. Serle, "and all the doubts that crouch in the dim shadows of the human heart dragged into daylight, and there wrestled with. This is why I hail even turbulent differing on vital topics, as a preferable thing to polite unreasoning acquiescence in authoritative dicta. Well may the Church be called militant; the faith that is not always fighting some sort of foe must indeed be in a moribund condition."

"I am longing for Millie's book to be out," said Mrs. Blake; "I am sure you will like it so much."

"I doubt not it will be a valuable work, earnest and true as her own nature. I am sorry to miss seeing her to-day, for I have a long message to her from my wife. I could not wait while she wrote a note of invitation; but the truth is, we are expecting a friend to dine with us to-morrow, who is extremely anxious to be introduced to Miss Farrell. Will you, dear Mrs. Blake, ask her if she can come to us?—and say Captain Neville is in town for a few days before joining his ship, and we want her to meet him."

But Wilberforce Serle did not express the thought which was flashing through his mind, the thought of how strange a coincidence it was that just to-day, when he was the bearer of this invitation, they should have been talking of the richest tribute genius and affection ever poured out for oblation to the dead; and of the poet of fierce passions and undisciplined will!

"I am sure Millie has no engagement," said Mrs. Blake, "and that she will be delighted to go to you. Neville, Neville," she continued, "I think I have heard that name before, have I not?"

"Probably, for I think you must remember

hearing of a poor girl who died of a sort of rapid decline, and who was very friendless until she knew your niece and my wife."

"Oh, I recollect; Millie struck up quite a sudden friendship with her, and I think felt her death very much. I never saw the young lady, though she came once to our house. Even then, I believe, she was ill."

"She must have suffered very much. Captain Neville is her father—a frank, warm-hearted sailor. He knew that Mrs. Serle and I had been well acquainted with his daughter, and he lost no time in coming to see us. It was only right to mention to him how attached a friend to his daughter Miss Farrell had been; indeed, he knew the fact already, and had she been as easy to find as myself, he would probably have paid her a visit before now. As it is, I thought the best way of bringing them together would be to let them meet at our house."

Perhaps, when Mr. Serle had left, it did cross Mrs. Blake's mind as just a little odd that she herself had not been included in the invitation; but she was not now so punctilious with regard to small attentions of this kind as of old she used to be; and be-

sides, there was no particular attraction for her in the presence of this Captain Neville. But when Millie came home, and heard what had occurred, she saw in a moment the true position of the case, and how desirable it was, on the occasion of an introduction to Captain Neville, to avoid the presence of so shrewd an observer as her aunt. Truly, she herself would require all her presence of mind, and to exercise the firmness with which she was undoubtedly well endowed.

Neither Wilberforce Serle and his wife, nor Millie Farrell, had ever swerved in their intention, arrived at by the side of the dead, to spare the father the unutterable anguish of knowing poor Barbara's true history. Far too brave and honest a man to have suspicion lurking in his nature, he had received the intelligence of his child's death from those whose tenderness she had named in her last letter to him, without one after-thought of doubt as to the fulness of the information they had given him. It is true that, at the time the sad intelligence reached him, he was only just recovering from a tedious illness, and his mind might not have been keenly strong to comment on trifling incidents; at any rate,

he was wholly without suspicion of the sin and the sorrow that had darkened her young life.

Mr. Serle had added to his invitation a request that Miss Farrell would come early, "an hour before dinner-time, if she could," and Millie understood the reason of the entreaty too well to neglect it. She found, as she expected, her host and hostess ready to receive her, ready to consult with her on what Mrs. Serle called "the plan of the campaign."

It was a pleasant little house in which the "popular preacher" resided, but only a little house still. Though he had lately been inducted into a rather considerable metropolitan living, Wilberforce Serle had found so many channels open as conduits for his money, that he was in no hurry to increase considerably the standard of his personal expenses. Nevertheless, he was fully justified in exercising a frank hospitality to his friends, and was too thorough an Englishman not to enjoy his privilege freely. Perhaps he vaguely knew the fact that the world's busiest workers do often agree and differ—or agree to differ—with the best practical results, at social friendly gatherings. At an Englishman's dinner-table, how

often have old truths shone out like the old silver—how often have personal prejudices been swept away with the crumbs!

"We are so glad you have come early," said Mrs. Serle, when the kind, woman's kiss had been exchanged between them; "we want to prepare you a little for the sort of person you will find in Captain Neville."

"I judged by your message," said Millie, "that you would like to see me before he arrived, so you see how early I am."

"Mary had better confess the truth," said Mr. Serle, with a grave smile, and a manner that was meant to reassure his wife; "she is afraid of you, Miss Farrell; she thinks you have not artifice enough in your nature to go through the sad little needful drama this evening."

"No, Wilby, dear, for once you are not quite right. Miss Farrell is so much cleverer than I am, that I suppose anything I can do at all, and even with difficulty, she can do with ease. Now, Millie, don't shake your head,—only it is a serious and difficult thing we have to do, as I found to my cost the day before yesterday, when Captain Neville called so unexpectedly."

"Certainly, my dear friends," said Millie, "the chief difficulty has fallen on you. I think, now that the first interview is over, we may reasonably hope that we shall be able to shield this brave man from a knowledge that could only be fruitful of anguish. I feel that we shall be sustained to do it."

"That is it, Miss Farrell," said Mr. Serle; "taken unprepared as we were on Tuesday, I felt, the whole time that Captain Neville was in the room, that his lips were restrained, that they were not permitted to shape questions that would have confused us to answer, that a halo of faith in his child so wrapped his vision, that he could not see suspicious tokens. I felt we were sustained, and that we should be sustained; but as he was evidently determined to know you, I thought it a far better plan for you to meet him with us by your side, to bear our part in the conversation, than for you to see him alone and at home."

"Oh, a thousand times better!" exclaimed Millie; "and I thank you from my heart."

"I think," said Mrs. Serle, "I think it was

his striking likeness to the poor girl that threw me off my balance."

"And I suspect it was that which nerved me," observed her husband. "Our poor Magdalen seemed almost visible, mutely imploring that I would be strong and brave; and that at this hour, when England needs her sons to be keen of mind and steady of arm, I would not shatter a mind and paralyze a right hand that were vowed to England's service."

"Is the likeness then, indeed, so strong?" said Millie, her eyes filling with tears of tender recollection.

"You will judge for yourself; but I am glad Mary has prepared you; for if you see as we do, you might have been startled."

Almost as he spoke, there was a knock at the door, and in a few moments Captain Neville was announced.

The likeness of the sailor Captain to his dead daughter was very remarkable; indeed, it seemed as striking as a likeness between a man of forty-five and a woman not twenty could possibly be. The eyes were of the same shape and hue, and their expression had the same blending of intelligence and

softness; the profile had the same lines as that which Millie so well remembered, only it was just a little heavier, as became his sex; while the waving hair that was swept back from his broad forehead, had still suggestions of the rich glow which had made Barbara's hair so singularly beautiful, though in the father's case a few white threads might be threatening to soften its tone.

Prepared as she had been for the circumstance, Millie could not help being impressed as she realized it; but when the two met face to face, and with warm and lingering pressure of their hands, it was the sea-captain who started, as if there was something about Millie that was strange and unexpected. He even turned pale, and lost for a minute or two that power of free and frank expression which was either especially his own, or else one of his sailor attributes. Mrs. Serle and her husband noticed the incident, more particularly because nothing of the kind had occurred when Captain Neville first met them, and probably that was an occasion of even deeper emotion than the present.

Harold Neville, however, soon recovered himself, made an earnest acknowledgment of

the pleasure it gave him to meet a lady who had been so dear to his daughter, and then, being too thorough a gentleman to force the conversation, he suffered it to glide as his host and hostess led. They had an object in wishing the little party to chat on many subjects, and thus grow mutually at ease, before the conversation reverted, as of course it did after a while, to Millie's friendship with poor Barbara.

CHAPTER X.

A WONDER STORY.

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep."

PSALM CVII., 23 and 24.

"Is he not charming?" said Mrs. Serle after dinner to Millie, when the two ladies had returned to the drawing-room, and after they had spoken for awhile with calm tenderness of the dead—that tenderness the most loving survivors acquire when the dust of three years has gathered about the coffin. "And now that time has softened the blow," she continued, "I can fancy that his greatest comfort is talking about his daughter. In a little while he will have so firmly fixed an

idea about the circumstances of her death, that we shall all, I hope, be at our ease with him."

"He is so like *her*," exclaimed Millie, in a voice unsteady from emotion, and evading a more direct reply. "I trace the likeness so many ways, in manner and gesture, and little turns of expression; and you know, Mrs. Serle, how I loved her."

"It is, I think, a great trial to form such a friendship as this, only, as it seems, to have the newly-made friends parted. I believe Captain Neville sails for the Black Sea next week; I do not think he would have given an evening to any friends but the friends of his poor daughter."

"I am glad to have known him," said Millie, —"glad even if I never see him again. Tell me, dear Mrs. Serle—"

"Why don't you call me Mary?"

"Well, then, dear Mary,—tell me, do you think he knows anything about my—my being an authoress?"

"I don't know, I am sure—but I should think so—everybody knows that."

"Not everybody, I hope," returned Millie Farrell; "not poor Lieutenants tossing about on foreign stations. And you know I have

done so little lately, my name has not been in a review these three years."

"Well, really, I don't think your authorship has been named by us, probably because there was the preconceived idea that it must be known."

"Then oblige me, dear friend, by not mentioning it to him. I cannot explain my reasons, but I have an instinct that guides me. I don't say that I desire a mystery, or that with an intimate friend I could long keep a secret about such a matter. Only ask Mr. Serle, pray do, not by any accident to mention the subject at present. If Captain Neville should return to England, and we should know him again, that will be time enough for him to hear of my inky fingers. Let him sail for the Crimea, thinking of me only as the 'elderly young' friend of his dead daughter."

"Millie, what a strange girl you are!"

"Not girl at all. I have to acknowledge myself an elderly young lady, or a young old maid, whichever you like to call me; and I feel for once an ardent desire to be judged simply as such. I do demur at being considered a middle-aged woman, I have not quite come to that."

"I should think not, indeed!" and as Mrs. Serle spoke, she looked at Millie, rather astonished at the sort of forced flippancy she had assumed; a flippancy so far removed from her natural manner: "I should think not. Yet, after all, Millie, what does it signify? I remember hearing of a very old man who spoke of himself joyously, as being on the sunny side of seventy."

"That was beautiful!" returned Millie, with enthusiasm; "we may be sure life and death were both sunny to him. He was like one watching a June sunset in the north, when the evening twilight only makes a grey canvas for the morning to paint her glories upon."

"Well then," continued Mrs. Serle, "what does it signify whether one is three-and-twenty or three-and-thirty? You see I remember your age, and you may have a longer life before you than many a girl now radiant in her teens."

"That is true; and you know we commonly have the best part of summer after the longest day. I have consoled myself with that idea before now, having long ago settled that thirty is the midsummer of life."

"Then am I, with my three bairns, only yet in the month of May?"

"It would seem so," replied Millie, smiling, "according to my calendar. And your spring-time has been so seasonable and propitious, that I look forward with a sort of faith to your summer, and autumn, and winter, all coming to you duly and tenderly."

"May you, dear, be a true prophet," answered her hostess; "certainly I had a happy childhood and joyous youth, and I am a heart-contented woman."

"As I say, everything was in season. I am afraid with many women, and men too, it is far different. My childhood and youth were so full of care, that I feel as if there were some reversal of a natural law in my life. When, as now sometimes happens, I feel myself younger than my years, I almost start, and seem to doubt and wonder whether I ought to rebuke or encourage the strange emotion."

"Encourage it, by all means," said Mrs. Serle, "if you mean by it, as I suppose you do, the faith, and hope, and elasticity of spirits which we associate with youth. But why should I be daring to preach to you! The fact is, I

thing like this, only the day had been more sultry, and the light sea-breeze which had seemed loosened at sunset was proportionately the more refreshing. I think I may own that my mind was raised to better thoughts than those which are all of the earth, earthy; and yet, though I was feeling almost resigned to professional disappointments and physical sufferings, I was not without a vague anguish about my child. Her last letters—and they were in my hand at the time—had seemed to depress me by some mute, unexplained spell. And yet in those letters there were not absolutely evil tidings; they contained no hint of her failing health; and though it had certainly annoyed me to find she was no longer under the roof where I had placed her, she wrote so reasonably and contentedly of her new position, that I knew I ought not to repine. I believe I had missed some letters, as a vessel foundered, bearing the mails; and I tried to persuade myself that my discontent was occasioned by the chain of correspondence having been broken."

"I remember," observed Mr. Serle, "I remember hearing poor Miss Neville say that some letter or letters of hers had been lost."

"Yes, I know it must have been so," continued the Captain. "Well, I was ruminating these things, with my heart full of tenderness to my child, when, overcome by a sort of faint lassitude,—for I had, perhaps, fatigued myself that day more than was prudent in my weak state—my eyes closed, and I doubt not a spectator would have declared me fast asleep. But it was not drowsiness by which I was oppressed, and I do not believe that it was ordinary sleep into which I passed. I was perfectly conscious where I was, and when I opened my eyes, the twilight had sensibly deepened. Through the open port-hole I could see a bright star glistening, but I was too lazy to raise my head, and verify what star it was. Whether I again closed my eyes or not, I could not declare; but the first thing I noticed was a delicious odour, like that of violets, and my cabin seemed enlarged at the same time that it was invaded by a faint white cloud, tinged with the palest rose colour. Do you believe me, Mr. Serle, or do you think I was dreaming?"

"Proceed, my dear sir; I implicitly believe you."

"Then it was that, looking as if her white

garments faded into the rosy cloud, my Barbara stood before me. Her presence was as real to me as yours is at this moment. Certainly she looked more lovely than I had ever thought her, though I dare say I had always had a father's weakness in judging of her beauty. The rippling length of her bright hair I shall never forget, nor the clear lustre of her eyes, for once she glided so close to me that I fancied she touched the papers in my hand. The wonder did not strike me at the time, but I have often since asked myself by what light it was I saw so clearly. Then she receded a little, and raising her hand, held out at arm's length a medallion portrait, —and this—this is the crowning wonder."

"Was it a portrait you could recognize?" asked Mr. Serle, seeing that his guest paused in his narration.

"No, not then; but it was so life-like, and real a thing, that though I cannot tell you how it was created, whether, in fact, it was anything more than a cloud-woven picture,—the lineaments imprinted themselves on my mind at once, and for ever. I have seen the original to-day—for that spirit medallion was the life-like portrait of Miss Farrell!"

"Most surprising!" ejaculated Mr. Serle; "then you recognised her at once—I saw you start at the first meeting."

"Did I start? I thought it was only some inner pulse of my being which bounded. And I know that after a few minutes, I felt when talking to her, a more than ordinary ease and repose, as if I had known her all my life."

"You cannot think how curious and interesting I consider this story," exclaimed the host. "Have you narrated it often before?"

"Never once—for it is altogether too sacred a theme to speak of, except to those who loved my child. But I have not yet told you all. When the vision had faded, and I lay as if in a trance of awe and wonder, the sailor who had been my nurse and servant entered the cabin to light my lamp, for by this time it was dark night; the opening of the door occasioned a draught, which fluttered some morsels of paper on my couch, fluttered them so that they were wafted through the open port-hole,—and rising on my elbow, to see what papers they could be, I found the letters I had so lightly held torn to many pieces, of which

those fluttering morsels were the dissevered portions. In fact, I held very little more than one nearly blank page in my hand. The spirit of my child had torn those letters with her ghostly fingers,—I declare that it must have been so—for no hand of flesh could by any possibility have done it; and as if to leave a legacy that should be further assurance of the truth, my handkerchief, which lay near, retained for hours the odour of violets—that scent which had seemed the atmosphere of my cabin during the vision. Well do I know what unbelievers would say —that I had torn the papers in my sleep—that my handkerchief had become violet-scented in some perfectly natural, though inexplicable manner—that my vision was a dream—and the likeness of Miss Farrell—from the memory of which I could have identified its original from among a thousand persons—was only a coincidence, curious certainly, but hardly more strange than things which happen every day."

"Unbelievers," said Mr. Serle, with a smile, "unbelievers could not dispense with that word 'coincidence;' it fills up so many gaps in their faulty logic. But what I think they would

also say is, that your state of health accounted for the whole thing;—now I have a theory to propound on that objection."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; I believe it is quite true that there is a certain infirm condition of the physical health, which is favourable to the recognition of spiritual phenomena. When the soul's prison walls of flesh are strong and dense, they enclose the captive spirit tightly, and thus enable it to do most sorts of its prison labour all the more thoroughly. There may be natures so beautifully balanced that the finest spiritual sense is coincident with the greatest physical vigour; but, generally speaking, it is through rents of the prison-house that spirits without communicate with the spirit within. Medical men, of course, set themselves to patch up these rents, and when their fever patients get well, and no longer dream dreams and see visions, the doctors persuade the sufferers that such things were wholly unreal; they may have been evil shadows of horror—or holy visitations of light—but the doctor has commonly the same smile of pity for both."

"What you say is most true," returned

the sailor, "and perhaps accounts for much of the incredulity on such subjects with which we meet."

"And yet," said Mr. Serle, "I hold that obstinate resisters of human evidence are, in one sense, of all people the most impiously and foolishly credulous."

"Credulous! Why, they believe nothing they do not comprehend! And you know what dear Dr. Johnson said about the shortness of the creed of that sort of persons."

"Yes; I remember the well-deserved retort," said the host. "But, for all that, I am ready to maintain that the class to whom we are alluding, do in reality build up a fabric of belief, more monstrous for a sane man to contemplate than the wildest story that ghost-seer ever proclaimed. Such people deny all spiritual influence, but they believe it possible for multitudes of their fellow-creatures, who may be sensible, and true, and wise, and good, in other circumstances of their lives, to have changed their natures when ghost-seeing was concerned—to have become more foolish than an ignorant dullard, or more false than an habitual liar, and all without profit or recompense. They deny to people remarkable for

their acuteness the ordinary powers of observation and prudence—in short, they believe in a witchcraft—against which they only are charmed—a witchcraft which temporarily takes away the wits of some of the wisest people on earth, for the poor purpose of making them seem to see, and seem to know, those things which the sceptic infers cannot exist, because they have not hitherto come under his notice."

"You are right," replied Captain Neville; "but there is another aspect in which we ought to regard the sceptic. It is when he admits our evidence with a sort of spurious respect, yet declares that we should doubt the evidence of our senses, doubt our capability of observation, doubt every thing on earth, that is for a moment in opposition to what he calls the laws of nature."

"And what is this?" returned Mr. Serle, with warmth; "what is this but another phase of the same arrogant credulity? Because he can only see to his own near and sharpcut horizon, he believes there are no undiscovered lands beyond. He believes that he knows the laws of nature—which is another way of saying that the finite com-

prehends the Infinite; and yet, it is precisely in reference to those same laws of nature that science is always shifting its ground. I read —but rarely prize much—books of science; they are so likely to be superseded in a few years, and to be only waste paper to my children. I grant that they are of value, a measured value, and that some people ought to buy and to have them; but I would rather fill my shelves with a class of books whose value is immeasurable."

"And that is the case with all true books which deal with the inner life of man. Do you know, Mr. Serle, I have often wondered that we sailors are not, in a greater degree, reading men."

"I think it is because you take in additional knowledge—as much as the mind can wholesomely digest—in a different manner. You see something of foreign countries—and that in itself is great education—but most of all you 'that go down to the sea in ships' drink in the knowledge of spiritual life in your midnight watches, in the tempest's loud teaching, in the lull of the calm."

"To be laughed at for our superstition!" replied Captain Neville. "Let me tell you

what I have thought about the sea—have felt in the tempest, and thought in the calm—felt and thought through all the moods of the uncertain ocean—that to me, at any rate, it could never be the hackneyed emblem of eternity. The same drop may freeze at the Pole and exhale in the tropics, but moments never repeat themselves; and for aught we know there may be angels who could reckon the drops of the ocean, as a mere 'prentice pastime, and preparation for greater behests. Any thing that could be so summed up is little like eternity."

"The idea of boundless space, and the idea of eternity, are both unutterable."

"And, therefore, can never be symbolled by anything meaner. But I have thought, as I have leaned over the taffrail in sunlight or in starlight, that the sea was indeed the emblem of human life—so bounded and yet so restless—obedient to such strict straight laws, and yet apparently so changeful and capricious; so smiling and yet so cruel; hiding such wealth, and yet harbouring such shapes of horror; every drop obeying its law of attraction, and yet serving to hold the earth sphered, as it whirls through the ether."

"You are almost a poet, Captain Neville."

"Do you call giving way to natural reflections being a poet?" said the sailor, a little shrinking from the "accusation."

"It would be a new definition of the word," returned the other, with a smile, "and I fear only a good one in the case of a poet's reflections. But your observations remind me of what I have often thought, namely, that the day may come when the noblest uses of scientific knowledge will be duly perceived and acknowledged; it must be a day, however, when the mass of mankind are less material minded than at present."

"Less material minded, and yet better appreciators of scientific attainment?" exclaimed Captain Neville, interrogatively.

"Yes, thus—and your own remarks about the sea are something of an exemplar of what I mean. When men become more spiritual minded, perhaps they will perceive that the ultimate of science is to present types, and antitypes, outward, visible signs of inward spiritual things. If the day should come when there is a little pause and rest in the hurried march of material progress, when the din of the tramp has lulled, and the dust

from the wheels has abated, men may find at last, and for ever, that the hard, dry facts of material knowledge can never be kneaded into the bread of life, though they may be hewn into the letters of a new alphabet."

"Ah, an alphabet of types and symbols, by which alone the subtlest things of the soul can be expressed! But to return for a moment to a subject that is never long absent from my own mind: after that vision of my daughter, after that scattering to the winds and the sea of the letters which had given me so much pain, I received another letter, which, though showing a plaintive under-current of sorrow, perhaps occasioned by her illness, as well as by her having heard of my accident, still comforted and consoled me. In that, her last, last letter, she mentioned you and Miss Farrell as kind friends, by whose advice she was acting, and my heart grew grateful to you long before your letter arrived, breaking to me so gently and kindly the news of her death. Yet then it was that I discovered the agreement of dates, and that she had appeared to me at farthest within a week of her passing away." And over-

come by a sudden spasm of recollection and emotion, the bereaved father drooped his head in his hands and shed tears like a child. The paroxysm was brief, but he was relieved by it.

Soon afterwards they quitted the dining-room, to the last only lighted by the weird flicker of the outside gas-lamp; and when they rejoined the ladies, Mr. Serle purposely led the conversation into less personal and emotional channels.

When at length their guests had departed, the host and hostess lingered for a while in their little drawing-room to talk over the events of the day, and to compare notes of each *tête-à-tête*. Summer though it was, and fireless as was the grate, Wilberforce Serle, like a true Englishman, planted himself on the hearth-rug, and the more animated he became at their mutual revelations, the more he seemed to imperil the chimney adornments, as he leaned backwards against the mantel-piece. But each little *tazza* had for that night a charmed existence, and even the French clock that ticked away the minutes towards midnight remained unscathed.

"Wilby," said Mrs. Serle, after the pause

which had been necessary for her to take in all the bearings of the wonder story, "these two people are intended for a nearer relation than that of mere acquaintanceship."

"Perhaps so," replied her husband; and certainly it was a safe rejoinder.

"How odd of Millie not to wish her authorship known," continued Mrs. Serle; "but don't you think poor Barbara mentioned it when she wrote to her father about her friend?"

"I think not, there was so much else to say, and, alas! so much also to hide; and the poor girl, towards the last, thought so little about that particular in her friend. Do you know," added Mr. Serle, after a minute's reflection, "I fancy I can track Miss Farrell's feelings and wishes on this subject—track them even better, perhaps, than she can herself. It is not only that she wishes to be judged simply as his dead daughter's friend; she does not wish to be misjudged by those past revelations of her former self. From what I can gather, her new book is a far different thing from anything she has produced before?"

"And better?" asked his wife.

"About as much better as sunlight is better than torchlight, I expect. Well, it has been a memorable evening, has it not?"

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW ACQUAINTANCE AND SOME OLD FRIENDS.

"His heart like an agate with your print impressed."
LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

IT happened that Mrs. Blake had an engagement with Elizabeth Hardy the following afternoon, and so it came to pass that Millie Farrell was alone to receive an unexpected visitor. Truth to tell, it had been rather a profitless morning, unless the hours of wandering thoughts and unsettled purposes do in reality prepare the mind for better things, as a loosening of the earth about the roots of a tree may sometimes help its growth.

She had not written that day, and she was not inclined for reading, so when Captain

Neville was announced, he caught her at the feminine occupation of needle-work. The visitor was laden with one square parcel, and Jackson carried another in his hand, and certainly a look of sudden satisfaction passed over the sailor's face, as he regarded Millie's occupation—and the rather shabby work-box which was open on the table.

"You see, Miss Farrell, how I trespass on our acquaintance," he exclaimed; "I have scarcely a quarter of an hour at my disposal, but I must employ it in asking you to accept what I have brought you. Not for my own sake can I ask it, but I think you will oblige me for the sake of the dear name that is on the lid."

As he spoke he untied the first parcel, and revealed one of those beautiful ivory work-boxes of Chinese manufacture, such as can only be produced by the laborious children of the Celestial Empire.

"When I was in China," he continued, "I procured several things of this sort—Mrs. Serle has gratified me by accepting one or two; but these, which have 'Barbara' carved upon them, seem as if they were ownerless, unless they might belong to you."

What could Millie say to gifts thus offered, except to receive them courteously and gratefully? The other parcel contained an ivory writing-desk, companion to the work-box in size and style; and here, on a shield, among the raised tracery of pagodas and bridges, was likewise cunningly carved the one word "Barbara."

"I chose her Christian name, instead of initials," said the father with a sigh, "because that would not have changed by marriage,—and I thought my Barbara would certainly marry."

"How beautiful they are! how infinitely I shall prize them!" exclaimed Millie, and her eyes, as she met the sailor's frank gaze, looked all the brighter for the tears which were gemming her lashes.

By a sudden impulse he caught her hand, and lifted it almost passionately to his lips. Millie blushed with the suffusing blush that colours to the very throat. Danger signals such red flags are, but they only give boldness to him whose words have power to unfurl them.

"You will write to me when I am away? You will write from the little desk—you will

—you must. Miss Farrell, since my daughter died, I have not had a woman correspondent in the world. You will serve your country by thus obliging me, for you will make me a better officer thereby."

"I will write to you if you wish it," answered Millie, as he continued to press for a promise.

"You shall hear from me," he replied, "from Malta, and then I shall expect regular letters. Fear not to say what you will. I shall take precautions, so that in case of my death no eye should see them."

The quarter of an hour stretched to twenty minutes, but duty claimed Harold Neville, and he had but just time to keep an appointment at the Admiralty. One more lingering pressure and kiss on Millie's hand, and he almost leaped the staircase, and sprang with a bound into the waiting Hansom cab.

Millie was vexed, terribly vexed, that she had suffered herself to be drawn to the window; because, though she did shelter behind the flowering plants, she feared Captain Neville saw her. She had not expected that in his headlong haste he would still turn round to look up at the balcony. And then she

began to question herself how she could be so weak as to care particularly what he thought; and why she should suffer herself to feel pangs at parting from this new friend? And for answer she knew that thrills of terror at the perils of war were mingling with a nascent pride that she, too, had stake and share in England's glory and England's penalties—a hidden jewel laid on the national altar! And after a while she paced the room with the slow, dragging step of one whose heart and brain are flooded by quick thronging emotions; and then she tearfully examined her presents, and consecrating the ivory work-box as a shrine, she transferred to it the lock of Barbara's hair, her thimble, a common pencil that had belonged to her, and such other relics of the dead as Millie had treasured.

But the desk! That was allowed to remain empty, but only, until—a letter arrived from Malta. And meanwhile Millie Farrell practised no self-deception; she knew very well that she could not now say of the Elixir of Love what she had said but the other day to Mrs. Sutton.

Mrs. Blake and her cousin had had multi-

farious engagements. Among others, they had called on Mr. Pennington, at his office in Lincoln's Inn, and when the trifling business which drew them thither had been transacted, the conversation so turned that they heard a considerable amount of news concerning Mr. Charles Augustus Farrell and his affairs. Mr. Pennington was now quite an elderly man, and though hale and hearty, thoroughly able to conduct an intricate case, such as the "Rivingstone *versus* Rivingstone" was likely to be, yet rather accustomed to leave the jog-trot business of the office to his son-in-law partner and their head clerk. Consequently he could spare time for gossip with an old friend; and, besides, it was the dull season of the long vacation.

"I am quite surprised," said Mr. Pennington, "that what I tell you should be news. I fancied you must have heard of the almost total annihilation of the Riga business in consequence of the war. To be sure, you are not so likely to come across city people as I am, but I thought Miss Farrell must have known all about it."

"Millie very rarely sees her brother," replied Mrs. Blake; "and though my sister-

in-law visits us now and then, I can quite understand that, to her, the subject would have so many painful bearings, that she would be little disposed to mention it."

"I feel a sort of tender pity for Mrs. Farrell," observed Elizabeth Hardy; "resolutely blind as she may have been to her son's heartlessness, there is still something pathetic in her maternal clinging."

"He was always her darling!" exclaimed Clara, with something of her old bitterness of manner; for it was hard to feel quite in charity with the ingrate under discussion—"always her darling! Dear Millie never complains, but I fancy she must have had a wretched time of it when they all lived together. But, Mr. Pennington, my husband's nephew must be half ruined, if all you have heard is true."

"Well," returned the lawyer, "there are some very rotten things that have a faculty of floating. Mr. Farrell seems to have sold himself to Mammon; and as he serves his clay-footed deity very faithfully, I suppose Mammon will keep its part of the bargain also."

"But I know," persisted Mrs. Blake, "that the Riga agency was the chief and most sub-

stantial part of his stolen property—I cannot help calling it by that name, and he has made no change, I believe, in his mode of living; however, we are going into the city to see Mr. Simmonds, and perhaps I shall hear whether Mr. Charles has narrowed his business establishment, at any rate."

"I can tell you he has not," said Mr. Pennington with a smile; "on the contrary, he has extended it. The fact is, if all reports are true, he is going to marry a rich widow—a woman old enough to be his mother."

"You do indeed surprise me," exclaimed Clara; "yet, after what I have seen, why should I be surprised at anything! Only, I remember the young gentleman used to be eloquent about the desirability of marrying a girl in her teens, that she might be flexible enough to be moulded to her husband's wishes."

"I don't think flexibility depends altogether on age," said Beta.

"You are right, Miss Hardy," exclaimed Mr. Pennington; "but it does so happen that the lady in question is reputed to have a most decided will of her own. She was described to me as vulgar, and a vixen. It is said she was cook to the late alderman, her

husband, and that having willed to marry her master, she accomplished her object, obtaining the reward of a long, unswerving, but quiet course of action—for the creature was quiet in the grub state: she only put on the vixen with her butterfly plumage."

"Then I don't think the world need sicken of envy at Master Charley's good fortune," said Clara; and a spice of the old worldly malice was again apparent.

"She is rich, though, by all accounts. She willed that the alderman should leave her a magnificent personage, and she gained her point. That is what people say."

"Well!" mused Mrs. Blake, "two such tempers in one house! and to be held together only by the metallic attraction on her side! Why, the roof will blow off before they have been married a month!"

And when the two ladies were seated in the cab, and rolling further eastward, poor Clara's perturbation still continued.

"Oh, Beta," she exclaimed, pressing her cousin's hand, "thinking of that man, and talking about him, makes me quite wicked. Oh, dear Beta, do help me to be good."

I suppose brief paroxysms of hatred and

revenge do arise in better-regulated minds than Mrs. Blake's; but it is a good sign when such feelings are recognised as unclean spirits, and not masked, and petted, and mis-named, according to a method that is very fascinating to poor human nature.

Nothing but what was veritably good news awaited them in the city. Harry had lately been introduced to the counting-house, and though he was in the habit of spending from Saturday till Monday with his mother, he was, in point of fact, a member of the Simmonds' family. This was the first occasion on which Clara had seen her boy in the midst of his office duties, and her eyes filled with tears as she looked at him. She was really grateful to Matthew Simmonds for all he was doing for her son, for he was giving him a home and instructing him in commercial affairs, with the view of ultimately leaving his business between him and his own son; but she could not wholly forget the aspirations and ambition of other years.

From his babyhood, through all the days of his velvet tunics, his long-tailed pony, and costly toys, to the hour of the terrible "crash," she had indulged in glowing castle-building

for her handsome boy. Whether her aërial stairway was ultimately to conduct to an Episcopal Palace, a Judge's Ermine, or the decorations of a K.C.B., she had never quite finally decided, being shrewd enough to think that something should depend on his own capacities and inclinations; but that he should enter on some profession which should place him on the platform from which the highest prizes of worldly honour could be reached, she had once thoroughly determined. Therefore, though she now felt thankful for the fair promises of his present position, her gladness was not without the drawbacks of contrast and remembrance.

Harry was seated on a tall stool, busily engaged with his pen, when his mother entered, and his bright young face, as he turned round to greet her, was like a gleam of sunshine in the dull, dingy office. The glow of health was on his cheek, and it was evident that city life and office work had not as yet touched its bloom. To be sure, office hours were hardly as long as school hours had been, and little Mrs. Simmonds sent him to bed early, and conducted the commissariat department in a right motherly manner.

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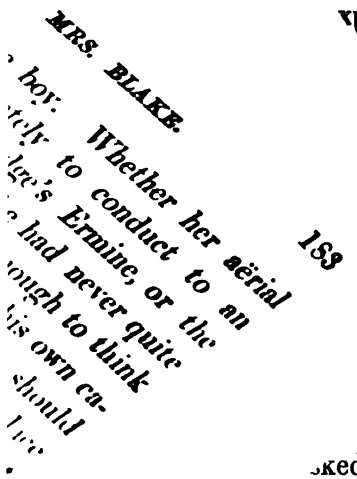

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"Why, Beta, how lazy you are," she said; "but you shall come, or else I shall think there is some conspiracy to prevent my walking, or even looking, down this bit of road."

"Conspiracy! What do you mean?"

"Why, certainly it is remarkable," returned Mrs. Blake, "that so many obstacles should arise to my carrying out such a simple purpose. Millie never will go this way, and the other day, when I was at the window, and my object nearly gained, Madame Julie,

"He writes a capital hand," said Mr. Simmonds, drawing Mrs. Blake's attention to the fact with real pleasure, and passing his arm caressingly over the boy's shoulder as he spoke; "and I can trust him to do twenty little things in business already."

Harry flushed with gratified pride at the praise,—happily his aspiration and ambition had taken the direction of business, and his desire was to be some day just such a merchant as "poor papa" had been before his failure. Mrs. Blake could not deny that his writing was beautiful, really like copper-plate, as she was told; but in her secret heart she felt that this writing was the seal to his destiny —it was so completely the commercial hand— not the least like some hands she had known, that had been spoiled by Greek exercises, or by the indifference of tutors who did not condescend to teach writing.

However, the visit was a pleasant visit, taken altogether, though she did ask some questions about Mr. Charles Farrell, and thus had Mr. Pennington's news confirmed.

It must have been nearly six o'clock when Mrs. Blake and her cousin stepped out of the omnibus, within a hundred yards of the home

where Millie was expecting them, and waiting dinnerless, to share with them that refreshing lady's meal, a substantial tea. Indeed the cloth had been spread this hour, with the cold ham and plate of appetising shrimps.

"Beta," exclaimed Mrs. Blake, when they were safe on the pathway, and the omnibus was rattling off another way, along a branching road—"Beta, let us go down by the Gothic cottages,—we shall come out opposite the house, and it is not ten yards farther."

"But why go ten yards farther when we are so tired?" asked Miss Hardy; and this semi-selfish objection seemed so strange from her, that perhaps that was why Clara smiled, as she noticed it.

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chancing to be in the room, pulled down the blind so suddenly and with such force that she broke the cord, and we had to have it mended before the blind could be rolled up again."

"My dear Clara, if you wish it so very much, pray let us go that way;" and as Miss Hardy spoke, she quickened her pace perceptibly.

"I thought you were tired; why do you hurry?" and Mrs. Blake persisted in walking if anything more slowly than before. "Beta," she continued, "in all seriousness, I believe there has been a design to prevent my walking this way, or looking out of the window at about six o'clock in the afternoon. I believe there must be a reason why I am always prevented from having a near look, or even a steady far-off gaze at the invalid gentleman who returns home every day with such remarkable punctuality."

"What invalid gentleman?" asked Miss Hardy, who did not act ignorance quite successfully.

"My opinion is that you all of you know more positively than I do. If I had not noticed how carefully I was thwarted in my

observations, I daresay I should have fancied that our new neighbour was a stranger, who happened to be rather like Mr. Basil Moore. Now I believe it is he himself."

"Well, dear Clara, and if it should be so—curious as the coincidence would prove, I would try not to be annoyed at his proximity."

"Do I seem annoyed? What I want is to be satisfied on the point. And see how well I have calculated! There he is, leaning on his stick: we shall meet him at his own door, whoever he is—his own door I call it, though he is but a lodger; I could have found out the name before now, had he been the owner of the house."

The stranger was, indeed, Mr. Basil Moore, but so altered by suffering, and so bent with premature old age, that Mrs. Blake might well have doubted the identity of her old enemy. It needs not much power of imagination to picture what the fall of the proud man had been on the discovery that his brother was a felon and a suicide. The shock was like that of the lightning stroke, or the earthquake.

He that had carried his honour, with pitiless pride, above the common honour of

common men, felt himself so disgraced and degraded, that to his morbid fancy he seemed sunk to the earth, the ready football of scoffers. A fit of bodily illness probably saved him from insanity; and on his partial recovery he gave up his private residence, took homely lodgings in this suburban district—avoided all except business acquaintances—and devoted himself to money-making with a greediness which, combined with the penuriousness of his present mode of life, soon acquired for him the title of miser.

Walking slowly, with the aid of a stick, and with eyes bent to the ground, he had not particularly remarked the two ladies advancing towards him; but perhaps Mrs. Blake, in her determination to be sure of his identity, so put herself in his way, that he could not help looking up. As they neared each other, their eyes met, and the widow made a bend of recognition, so decided and unmistakeable that it almost amounted to an old-fashioned curtsey. Mr. Moore lifted his hat in return, and though there was a startled expression about his pale face, the salutation was undoubtedly respectful. Had the ladies looked back, they would have seen Basil Moore,

before he opened his gate, cling for a moment to the iron railings, as if to rally from some sudden spasm or emotion. Miss Hardy did not speak; but she saw by the way her cousin fumbled at her pocket for her handkerchief, that she had burst into tears.

"I wanted to do it," said Clara, speaking rather huskily; "he must have suffered horribly, and I wanted him to feel that I no longer bore enmity."

"My darling Clara," cried Beta, with more demonstrative fervour than belonged to her usual manner,—"this has been a day of many struggles,—I know it has—but they have ended in victory!"

CHAPTER XII.

A REVELATION.

"For, boy, there's shame in ancestry, as well as honest pride,
If we should count the many crimes to which we are allied;
* * * *
For nought are we accountable but what ourselves believe,
For nought are we respectable but what ourselves achieve;
God's questions are not like to man's—'Whence come? to whom belong?
What feats did your progenitors? Your fathers, were they strong?'"

MRS. D. OGILVY.

TIME has passed on. The flags of England and France, splashed by the Alma's water, lean more closely together since their brotherly baptism, as they wave aloft in all the

pride of victory. Europe has been startled by that charge of the Six Hundred at which "some one had blundered;" and for a moment has stood at gaze, only to recover breath, amid sighs of astonishment at such waste of Curtian heroism. Already England endorses the Frenchman's judgment, and owns, though "magnifique," it was not "la guerre." Out of Inkermann's fog stars of glory have darted, to shine on the brows of living heroes, or glisten above the soldiers' graves which stud the far Crimean shore. On the Tchernaya, Italy's sons, braced at the foot of her mountain wall, have proved their high pedigree, and blown a bugle blast that has made the ears of despots tingle. The Muscovite's navy has been sunk, and Sevastopol's proud towers have fallen. The world is talking of peace as a near sure thing, and English hearts are venturing to sum up their wealth of love and life!

There have been some changes and counterchanges at Sutton Court. Philippa and her parents had spent the winter with their friends in Rome; but Mrs. Sutton was unwilling to leave her father for a longer period, and his advanced age precluded his travelling

with them. Consequently, they had lived the last few months at Sutton Court, in almost unbroken privacy. But brighter days were dawning. Edgar, in devoting himself to the management of his father's mercantile affairs, had developed such extraordinary business abilities and finance faculties, that old losses were already nearly made up, and a broader basis than even before existed was laid for future operations. It seemed to be openly acknowledged that Edgar Sutton possessed that sort of genius which, perhaps, more than any other, waits for fit circumstances of life, in order to be duly developed; namely, the genius for organizing vast undertakings, subordinating petty details to great interests, and taking a clear and comprehensive view of remote causes and effects. Quietly, and by almost imperceptible degrees, he had acquired a position in the family very different from that which is ordinarily awarded to the younger son.

Old Lord Rivingstone is recently dead, at the age of eighty-five; and already the opponent of Arthur, the claimant of his grandfather's title and estates, is taking the promptest measures that lawyers can suggest

to disturb the succession. But it is the autumn of the year, when the cog-wheels of the law move sluggishly, and it is hoped there will be ample time to collect and arrange documents and rebut false statements.

Arthur—promoted to the rank of Major—has landed in England from the Crimea within these few days; and, after half-a-week spent in London, with two gentlemen of the long robe, who had consented to linger a day or two in town, for the purpose of a consultation, he was now expected with Edgar at Sutton Court, on a visit to his old friends.

It was just such a mild and pleasant sunny morning following a night of rain and storm as a day of five years ago, which, with all its minute details, was imprinted for ever on Philippa's memory. All the free uses of the house, and hospitable customs of the family, had now been resumed; and, as Philippa stood at a window of the drawing-room —her form half hidden by the ample draperies of the curtain—and listened to familiar sounds, and gazed on familiar objects, for an instant it seemed to her excited fancy that the gulf of time had closed up, and its events rolled away like the pictures of a dream.

Yet the delusion was but momentary; five years of mortal life are never thus to be disposed of; and, though the clock clicked with its old musical note, there was something in each vibration that told of long service and weary waiting. The scythe on the wet grass, and the harsh creak of the garden roller, had each its little message of remembrance. And, as for sights, the shadows of the great trees, and the rich tints of the near shrubbery, and the heavy droop of the dark-hued autumn flowers, made a scene so identical with that of another September day, that the Past pressed upon her brain, as if it were laid there by the hand of a giant.

Had she been wholly blameable, or had her conduct only sprung from overstrained womanly pride? And how differently might two lives have revolved had a few pettish words of stubborn pride remained unspoken? These were old questions, never quite clearly answered, but which would put themselves to her with renewed force to-day. How she longed for—yet how she dreaded—the next few hours! She had kept her heart's secret reasonably well—yet not so well but that her mother had glanced at it with loving sym-

pathy more than once. Remembering this, Philippa was glad that she had been left so much alone this morning—glad, though a feeling of wonder, hardly active enough to be curiosity, had passed like a shadow across her mind—wonder why her parents and her grandfather had been so closely closeted together for two or three hours.

Philippa was musing thus when at last her mother entered the room. Mrs. Sutton's face bore traces of strong emotion, not wholly of sorrow, though her cheeks were wet—not wholly of joy, though her eyes looked glad. The look was rather that of perplexed surprise than anything else. She came close up to her daughter, and, passing her arm caressingly round her, she exclaimed,

"Your grandpapa wishes to see you, my love; he has been telling us an astonishing history, with which you ought to be made acquainted, and it is his wish that from his own lips you should hear it."

"An astonishing history! dear mamma, what can you mean?"

"Nay, my child, I have promised my dear father to respect his wishes. It is vain to deny that you are his pet, his darling, and I

would not for worlds thwart him in this matter. You will find him waiting for you in my morning room." As they parted, Mrs. Sutton kissed her daughter, and looked at her with a strange look, that brought the colour into Philippa's cheek.

Old age is usually calm, as if it were resting in some smooth haven, apart from the strong eddies and currents of life; but when it is moved, provided the motive power be noble and generous—not petty and selfish—the sight is more impressive than is a far greater amount of turbulence and demonstration in the young. Old Mr. Johnstone occupied a large easy chair, against which his stick was leaning, and he rested one arm upon the writing-table, near a sheet of paper covered with memorandums in his own handwriting. His face was lighted and animated to a degree that took seven years from his appearance of age, and as Philippa entered the room he pointed to a chair by his side, calling her by the pet name "Philippa my Queen." But before she seated herself, her peach-like cheek rested for a moment against the one which four-score years had bleached to waxen white, and the ebony masses of her hair touched the

snow of his, as she gave him her loving morning kiss. And then she drew the light chair close to his elbow, and held one of the old man's wrinkled hands between her warm soft palms.

"The second time of telling a story it ought to flow more easily than at the first," said the old man, "but I am not sure that I shall find it so. And yet, my Philippa, I know I am right in setting myself this task. Now listen to a long story, which I will make as short as possible."

"Dear grandpapa," exclaimed Philippa, "if you have set yourself to blame me, you know I can bear any rebuke from you."

He shook his head with a smile, and there was a movement of the imprisoned hand which reassured her.

"You know very little of my early life," continued the old man, "only I believe that when quite a boy, I, after my father's death, ran away from the unkind usage of my stepmother."

"And," said Philippa, "I have heard you say that there is no one of the name of Johnstone with whom you claim any relationship?"

"That is true, and yet it does not follow that I have no relations. I had a brother a year my junior, and the first name we learned to sign was not Johnstone, though it had the same termination. I have only a dim recollection of my mother, for she died when I was but six years old; but what I do recollect is of a beautiful woman, who wept more often than she smiled, and whose tenderness for her children was always dashed with a mysterious bitterness. My father was heir to a title; nevertheless, his extravagances had plunged him into the worst sort of poverty, the poverty of debt and difficulties. My stepmother was a hard, selfish, tyrannical woman, disappointed, I know, at not having children of her own, and who treated us boys with a scorn which I, at least, understood too well."

"Cruel woman!" exclaimed Philippa, but her thoughts had bounded beyond the limits of those early sorrows.

"I was but twelve years old," he continued, "when, after a lingering illness, my father died. Young as I was, he on his death-bed confided to me a terrible tale, commissioning me to repeat it to my brother in after-years. We were the children of shame; no blessing

of the church had ever sanctioned our parents' union. My brother had a nature very different from mine—I cared not for the name I had so little right to bear—and ultimately, when I came to make my own way in the world, I dropped the half of it. He stormed with passion and indignation, and vowed that he disbelieved a story that could only have proceeded from the ravings of delirium. My brother—but mark me, Philippa, my younger brother—was the grandfather of the man who to-day claims to be Baron Rivingstone. This he cannot be; for if the rights upon which he founds his claim exist, they must be mine, not his. From Edgar's letter of this morning I gather quite distinctly that it is the discovery of the marriage certificate of my parents which is the important document on which the opponents of our poor young friend so much rely. But, Phil, my darling, you are ill — suffering — you are trembling at this story."

"No—no—only faint—and—there is water in the room."

And Philippa, usually so active and ministering, suffered her old grandfather to rise, to wait upon her, to give her water, and to give

her air; and so far from either of them desiring assistance, the old man quietly turned the key in the lock, to prevent the possibility of interruption.

"My darling understands now the root of my reasoning and lecturing about pride—pride of birth especially," continued the old man, when Philippa had recovered some degree of composure.

"And yet—and yet you knew all the time who you were!" she exclaimed, with strange emotion. "Why, the Rivingstones descend from Plantagenet kings, and through them from Alfred and Charlemagne," and Philippa's whole frame seemed to expand as she spoke.

"I did not think you were such a genealogist," returned her grandfather; "you must have made a study of the Rivingstone pedigree, I think. But my Queen must not forget the black badge—the bar sinister on the shield."

"But just now you said that which proves it is not so," and Philippa's voice betrayed the conflict of desires that was arising in her soul.

"It would take much to wipe away the meaning of my father's dying words. But

this much is clear—either we bear the badge sinister, or our soldier friend is not Baron Rivingstone. There, there, tears will relieve you," he continued, seeing that Philippa had burst into a passion of weeping. "Philippa, if I have probed a wound, it has been done in great love; and I think if my Queen can tell her secret to any one in the world, it is to her old grandfather." As he spoke, he opened his arms wide, and Philippa sank on her knees, and was folded tight and close as she hid her face on his bosom.

"My pet," he proceeded, smoothing her dark hair with his wan hand, "my darling, that I named after her great ancestress, I know the strife that is at her heart; but guessing what I do, I thought it well she should learn the truth, and fight her battle before meeting Arthur Rivingstone again."

"Bless you, bless you, dear grandpapa!"

"Tell me," he continued, with an encouraging caress, "tell me, how was it? Did you refuse him?"

"No, not quite — a misunderstanding," and she trembled perceptibly as she muttered the words.

"I thought so; but you love him still?"

There was no answer, but the silence was enough.

"And he?"

"I think so, I dream so; but I do not know."

"Was it pride—some strange, wilful form of pride?"

"Yes," she murmured; "yes, a wicked pride."

"You see how well I have understood you!" said the old man tenderly. "And, having this new knowledge, you will be less haughty, will you not?"

"I can never be haughty to him again. But, grandpapa," she added, starting from her drooping attitude as she spoke—"but I have a favour to ask; and, oh! you must grant it. Forbid my parents to tell *him* this tale—till—till I, through you, give them leave."

"My child, that is too loose an arrangement. Name some time."

"Well, then, a day—four-and-twenty hours—will teach me the truth, be it sweet or bitter."

"I will make them promise; but what reason shall I give?"

"Say it is your will: surely that is enough. Oh, grandpapa, pity and respect me! Don't make it impossible for me to be calm, by having even their loving eyes turned observingly upon me! Are you blaming me for my secrecy? What have I had to tell that a woman ought to have told?"

"Have I blamed my little queen?" said Mr. Johnstone, with a sigh.

"No, no; forgive me, dearest, dearest grandpapa;" and again her arms were round him. "It was cruel of me so to speak. But you know—for there is something in our natures which answers with quick sympathy—you know that there are crises in life, at which every hand, however loving, which meddles, works woe—and, believe me, this is such a crisis with me."

"I do understand, and it shall be as you wish. My child, there are conflicts in my heart as well as in yours. I know not what I wish. Through your mother, all would ultimately be Godfrey's; and that means so much! And Arthur is so noble!" And as the old man leaned back in his chair, his face was so blanched, that Philippa feared he was growing faint.

"Grandpapa! Grandpapa!" she exclaimed, "these painful explanations have been too much for you. Stay still, while I go myself for some wine."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ROMAN WOOING.

"As one that was of chivalry the flower
At home arrives with many worthy men.
* * * *
The fresh knight safe from wars, and rocks, and storms,
Who loveth thee, e'en as his own heart's life."
CHAUCER (modernised).

IT was only the passing faintness of fatigue which had overcome the old man, and Philippa had at last the happiness of seeing him rally under her care and attention.

Very deep, and true, and beautiful, had the love between them always been, but there can be no doubt that it was now intensified.

After all the excitement of the morning, a great calm seemed to have fallen upon Philippa Sutton; a calm that might have been

surprising to superficial observers of character, if such had been acquainted with her heart's history, but which was not without its clue to the one who could see deeper. Old Mr. Johnstone—as he must still be called—comprehended the source of his darling's serenity, and rejoiced to his heart's core that he had followed so obstinately the dictates of his own judgment.

Philippa had decided, and with clear, unwavering decision there always comes a certain amount of calmness. Whatever might happen on the arrival of Arthur Rivingstone, she would so behave, that, in all human probability, a few hours must decide her destiny. On such a day as this, five years ago, she had shown all the petulant pride of her nature; to-day, her pride, broken up and molten by many circumstances, had turned to an internal force that would surely help her to avoid any repetition of old mistakes. Thus she reasoned; and Philippa Sutton was really a very clear-seeing personage—only she had not lived quite long enough in the world to have discovered that, plan and purpose as we may, and true as our judgment and prevision may be as to the ultimate issue of events, we never can lay down an exact chart of the

way in which the end will be brought about.

All the household knew by what train Edgar Sutton and his friend were expected; therefore, when, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, wheels were heard in the avenue, there was no doubt as to what the sound indicated. Mr. and Mrs. Sutton, with old-fashioned hospitality, hurried to the great hall to receive their guest, who, though he carried his left arm in a sling, sprang from the phaeton with agility, and entered the house with an eagerness which showed how sure he was of his welcome.

That he glanced round, as if looking for another face, is true; yet he had not quite expected that other to be there. They hurried him into the drawing-room, and there was Philippa standing motionless; and, it might be, a little supported by the marqueterie table on which her hand rested. As their eyes met, a momentary paleness was sweeping over both faces, to be succeeded by a flush that mounted to the brows of both—as you may have seen flowers bowed by the breeze, and showing for an instant their brightest lining. And when Arthur took her hand, he pressed it with so firm and linger-

ing a grasp, that, calm as she had determined to be, Philippa trembled. But we have to remember what Arthur Rivingstone had said, in sight of the Sabine hills, with regard to an old Roman method of wooing.

And I really believe that, allowing for the difference between toga and frock-coat, he looked not unlike the type he had set himself in one particular to imitate. The brave, inured, experienced Crimean officer, unscathed through Inkermann's terrors, and only what he called "scratched" at the Redan, was hardly the same personage as the studious Oxford graduate which we first knew him. Through the whole campaign, until he was wounded, he had kept his health to a marvel; but he was bronzed by exposure to air and sun, and he looked as if he must have grown taller, as well as stouter, so much did his whole being appear to have expanded. A great change also was effected by the beard which he had suffered to extend its brown and silken length many inches. Altogether he was the sort of personage that Titian would have liked to paint in the robes of a young Venetian noble, or Vandyke to have set in the knightly adornments of a high-born cavalier; and those who

have pondered, even a little, over antique portrait-busts or medallions, can see that the Italians of all times, and the modern Englishman, have their family likeness.

Edgar followed the guest at his leisure. He had stayed to pat the horses, and to speak a few words of kindness to old servants, who all loved him, and gathered about him in a way they never dreamed of doing with Godfrey, on his few and far between visits—heir though he was. Clouds and sunshine were chasing each other in Edgar's heart, and perhaps they showed themselves on his countenance. After the deep interest he had taken in Arthur's affairs, and the personal exertions he had made in his behalf, the recent turn which those affairs had taken, vexed and disappointed him excessively. He comprehended much that Arthur felt, which was scarcely hinted at even between themselves, and never alluded to in the presence of mere worldly counsellors and acquaintances—people who invariably reject the higher motive or reason, when a lower one is more apparent.

The truth was, Arthur Rivingstone was by no means a man to break his heart for the loss of title and estates. He loved the motto,

"God defend the Right," and was ready to withdraw his claims the moment he found them unjust; but it was a sharp and bitter pang to think of wealth and honours, hitherto held so worthily, passing to a profligate, a drunkard, a gambler; to think of a name revered for generations being henceforth associated with so mournful a specimen of humanity as was the new claimant of the Barony of Rivingstone.

Sympathy with his friend's trouble wove the clouds, but the sunshine was all personal. Only that morning Edgar had received a letter from Agnes Bendoran, in which, in answer to some earnest entreaties of his, she announced that Lady Isabella and herself would soon be in England, and Edgar knew well that this meant Agnes was ready to be his wife. Perhaps he loitered in the doorway and hall at Sutton, for as long as it has taken us to talk about him, and when he had reached the drawing-room, he found his parents and Arthur conversing rapidly, with all that quick questioning in which long-parted friends commonly indulge at meeting. Having his suspicions about the state of his sister's heart, and of that of his friend, he would have read

their secret through and through, had he been there a few minutes earlier.

But now, Philippa was sufficiently composed to greet him with sisterly cordiality, though it might be her kiss was a little less lingering then usual.

"My dear friends," the guest was saying, "pray call me Arthur as of old—or Major Rivingstone, if you have to introduce me—but by no title to which I have only a disputed right."

"Mother," interposed Edgar with a smile, "he is excessively proud of the Major, that is it—being very nearly—if not quite—the youngest Major in Her Majesty's service."

"Well," returned Arthur, "he has betrayed me; it is the truth. I noticed to-day how proud your horses were of their new rosettes, and I suppose I toss my head in something the same fashion, since I have carried my majority. I have been a lucky fellow, and if I have to cut out my path in life with my sword, I may be thankful that so much brushwood is made away with already. I have had such luck in being in so many things."

"He has been in 'every thing,' I believe," said Edgar.

"No, not the Alma—I was too late for that, thanks to the villain who laid me up in Rome."

"Perhaps," exclaimed Mrs. Sutton, "perhaps that hurt was a mercy of Providence to retard you;—who knows?—you might have been killed at the Alma!"

"And died a Captain!" ejaculated Edgar, who did not want the conversation just now to become too serious.

"Well, I have sometimes thought," said Arthur, "that perhaps my evil chances had been summed up into a billet for the Alma, and that, escaping from it, I had a charmed life through the rest of the campaign. All the circumstances of my stay in Rome were very curious—strange enough, many ways, to make a man pause, and think of the bridle chains—small, but of adamant—by which we are led and guided."

"But you were wounded at the Redan, were you not?"

"Yes; but the doctors made too much fuss about me, I fancy, urging me to accept a mission to England. If there had not been other inducements, I should hardly have agreed, I think. As you see, I am perfectly

well, though my arm may be stiff and weak; I shall only wear my black bracelet a day or two longer—unless, indeed, I find it less ugly than the scar." As he spoke, he stretched his left hand a little beyond his cuff, and showed that his wrist was encircled by a black ribbon. "Happily it is not my sword arm," he continued, "for it may be long before it is as strong as the other. My unlucky arm, that has been twice lacerated, and once so ignobly." And presently the talk glided to other topics, and the dinner-hour was mentioned,—seven o'clock, as of old —and then Arthur Rivingstone was shewn to his room, for the brushing away of dust; and when, after a few minutes, he returned to the drawing-room, Philippa was its only occupant.

She was leaning back in an easy chair, near one of the windows, and gazing out at the garden. The door always opened noiselessly, Arthur had a light step, and the carpet was of a thick, soft pile, yet Philippa felt instinctively who was there, before, with a forced courtesy, she turned her head. When she did so, he was already by her side, looking down at her as she looked up. The next moment, he leaned his wounded arm on the

back of the chair, and said in the rich, low voice of tenderness, dashed with a tone of authority,—"Walk with me through the shrubbery—pray do—you must."

"Yes, if you wish it—let me fetch my hat;" and she did feel the need of hat or veil, or some sort of sheltering head-gear,—less, however, to shield her from the light breeze or sunshine, than from Arthur's gaze.

"Let *me* go," he replied: "I saw a hat on the stand, that told me it was yours: see if I am not right." And darting into the lobby, he returned in half a minute with the article in question, and a black scarf which he had found beside it.

Now Philippa's was a real garden straw hat, large and slouching, and trimmed only with a dark ribbon, the brocade of which imitated scarlet poppies; her hat was a thing not in the least resembling those concoctions of incongruities which are real abominations. The English language has two words, instead of one, by which to designate a woman's out-of-doors head attire, and bonnets may be rich and gay, and still please an artist's eye; but a small smart *hat*, burthened with feathers, and bugles, and lace, is replete with an evil

expression, and opposed to all the canons of true taste—as might easily be proved, were the argument worth entertaining.

On the other hand, a real rustic straw hat, like Philippa Sutton's, is as modest as if it belonged to that "Dora," who, for the sake and memory of her true love,

"Lived unmarried till her death;"

yet, withal, it may have its spice of coquetry, innocent and arch, but still bewitching. In tying on her hat, Philippa crushed her hair into closer and so still richer-looking masses; and as Arthur managed with his one free hand to drape the scarf across her shoulders, perhaps he touched for an instant the heavy treasure which weighed down its silken net. He had not forgotten the trick of the window-sill; one finger was enough to touch the spring, and one hand quite strong enough to raise the window and push open the door beneath. As they descended the steps which led to the lawn, a favourite dog leaped against Philippa's dress, as if rejoicing at the prospect of a walk; but, offended at receiving little notice, he did not follow far: still his demonstrations had the effect of making Philippa lift her

skirt a few inches, and reveal for a moment her dainty little boot. Arthur felt capable of stooping that instant to kiss the ground the little foot had touched—but he did nothing so absurd. On the contrary, his first proceeding was a very ordinary act of courtesy from a gentleman to a lady when walking with her in a garden. He gathered, from a remarkable tree which skirted the shrubbery, a dark red rose, and presented the flower to her.

Hitherto silence had been more eloquent than the few words which had passed between them, and even now, as Philippa took the flower, with an instinctive gesture of acknowledgment, though her lips parted, no sound escaped them. It was an odorous rose, and she naturally raised it to enjoy the fragrance: thus, as once before, just such a flower had done, it served to screen the tell-tale play of emotion about her mobile lips.

"The last time we walked round the shrubbery," exclaimed Arthur, "was on just such a day as this—do you remember it?"

"Ye—es."

"I obeyed you then—obey me now."

"Obey!" returned Philippa,—and with all her resolution to permit—or invite—a crisis—

and notwithstanding her former scorn of a too humble wooing, there was in her tone some stir of resistance to this strange dictation.

"Yes—my Beloved—obey—but only to the extent of answering a question. What did you do with the red rose I gave you, then?"

"Do with it!" And her words were almost whispered.

"Yes," continued Arthur, speaking passionately; "I followed your footsteps that day, to see if you dropped it, that I might have something you had touched to keep for an amulet. I questioned the servants, saying it was a flower of rare sort—as was true. There was not even a leaf dropped that could tell me you had pulled it to pieces. Did you throw it away?"

There was no answer, and Arthur continued—

"Oh, if I dared to believe that you remember those hours with even a faint resemblance to my passionate memory of them, I should feel to-day as if in recovered Eden. Philippa!"

The thick foliage made shade where they were walking; but all the more clearly did

Arthur perceive that Philippa's cheeks were wet with tears. Boldly he passed his arm round her waist, again uttering the one word her name. In a feeble struggle to resist, her hat fell back and lay on her shoulders, hanging by the strings.

"Nay," he exclaimed, with a lover's imploring passion, "do not resist the might of my one strong arm; it has force enough to hold you tight for ever."

And then, as he attempted to kiss her forehead, the tearful face hid itself, but only so close to his heart that his kisses fell upon her soft bright hair.

There are emotions which belong to the revealings of eternity, and shadow forth to us a dim outline of what may be meant by life when there shall be no more time. The deep warm love of two pure hearts is one of God's sacred mysteries; a holy thing, not to be approached by the scorner, and hardly by the most reverent, except with unsandalled feet, made pure from the travel-dust and stain of the daily worldly walk. Whether that mute embrace of Arthur and Philippa was to be measured by seconds or minutes, they could not have told: but, at last, Ar-

thur breathed in the tone that is softer and yet clearer than a whisper,

"Look up!"

And Philippa is if constrained to do his bidding, slowly lifted her head, and the long, close gaze which followed, betokened the true bridal of their souls, from which life henceforth dated!

How calm they were, when, half-an-hour later, they still lingered in the shrubbery walk! But now they rested on a garden seat, with dry dead leaves rustling at their feet; and the sun, nearing its setting, shot its level beams beneath some trees, and lighted the path which reflected its radiance.

"Had you been a princess, and my own fortune ten times darker, I should have done just the same. I determined long ago that there should be no new entanglement, born of doubt and hesitation, between us. I am not quite the mere soldier of fortune. Thanks to my grandfather's precautions, I can shield you with sufficient tenderness from the rough blasts of poverty, even if I lose all which I seemed born to inherit."

"And if I had been a peasant instead of a princess?" asked Philippa, with a smile.

"It would have been a little more difficult; but, still, I should have done just the same. Oh, darling, my will to win you had become like a torrent. No power could have turned it aside, except the blank horror of your not loving me. But, my queen, my empress, has not told me what she did with that rose?"

"How did you know that I kept it?" murmured Philippa, the flush on her cheek deepening.

"By inspiration. After that parting, it seemed to me that you were removed just to that right focus at which I could see perfectly the lineaments of your character."

"Then I am much too close now," she said, laughing, and trying vainly to release an imprisoned hand.

"Ah, what cruel wit; but it is the attribute of lovely things to shew their beauty broadly afar off, and yet to demand the closest knowledge in order that we may love them best."

"Hark, there is the dressing bell. I must go. Indeed I must."

"It is terrible to part so soon," exclaimed

Arthur; "and almost terrible to meet again before other eyes until all is explained. And yet surely every one suspects my love. Philippa, this one hour compensates for five long years of waiting!"

And by this time they were walking briskly towards the house.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TELEGRAM.

"A soul sincere,
Scorns fraud or fear,
Within itself secure;
For vice will blast,
But virtue last,
While truth and time endure."

CAREY.

Two days had passed away; two days into which such stirring interviews and sharp surprises had been crowded, that they seemed in the retrospect as long as an ordinary week. Surely it is a mistake to suppose that time happily passed has of necessity passed swiftly. The even, monotonous days, unmarked by joy or sorrow—the days on which we glide down the stream of life like voyagers in a boat when the rowers are resting—are the

days that leave so little to be recollected that they seem short and fleeting!

The brothers Godfrey and Edgar were walking side by side in the shrubbery, and their discourse proclaims that various curtains of mystery have been pulled aside; that the old grandfather's lineage is recognised throughout the family; and that the betrothal of Arthur and Philippa has been avowed, and has received the sanction of her parents.

Godfrey had taken a sudden freak to run down to Sutton, for some shooting, he said, and had reached home the day after the arrival of his brother and Arthur Rivingstone. But the fact was, Godfrey cared more about getting some money than he did for partridge shooting, and he thought—to use a phrase of his own—he could put on the screw more successfully in person than by a letter to his father. The intelligence which it was thought right and just to communicate to him, the elder son, was for a moment astounding to his mind; but, with that curious narrowness of view, that want of comprehensive capacity which would seem to be inherent in unprincipled people, whatever their

cleverness, he soon began to talk and act as if his grandfather's dormant claims were already legally established, and himself in the position of ultimate heir to a peerage. He would not —or could not—see any doubts or difficulties in the question.

"My dear Edgar," he exclaimed, in a bantering tone, "it is a pity you are not my senior. You would make such a pattern elder brother, teaching the young idea to shoot in a proper direction. What you say about the present uncertainty of the case, and the sympathy you express for the gallant major—all your observations, in fact, do honour to your head and heart, as the platform orators would say. But in this pleasant wicked world money and position are the things we all struggle for; and I confess it is a charming thought to know I have a double chance of not being that unlucky wight who is hindermost in the race. We know who catches him. Now don't look shocked, as if you were going to quote Scripture, and teach me to treat the Devil with more respect."

"We meet so seldom," said Edgar, "that it is not worth while to quarrel; but certainly

I had wished to talk seriously to you on many subjects."

"Pray don't, for of all things I hate what you call serious talk. Old Serle dosed me with it, *ad nauseam*, years ago, and the taste is hardly out of my mouth yet. Besides, I know your half-crazy opinions about love and matrimony, and rank and money, and honour and friendship, et cetera, et cetera. You really had far better listen to me, for I have seen something of the world, and besides, as the future head of the house, I feel I have a right to speak. Sutton Rivingstone, or Rivingstone Sutton—I wonder which combination will be the family name when my mother is a Baroness in her own right?"

Edgar smiled: if he had been less pained at the contemplation of his brother's character, he might have laughed outright. Godfrey, not observing the smile, thought only that he had obtained a patient hearing.

"Philippa," he continued, "is a little fool, but that she always was; only she has shown her folly to its height, by choosing this moment to engage herself to—to, in fact, to anybody. Consider how very different her pre-

tensions may be in a few months, or even weeks."

"Godfrey, you shock me. I must say it—you really do. Arthur Rivingstone and our sister have been attached for years——"

"But," interrupted Godfrey, "but not engaged; and really dukes have often married more humbly than into such a family as ours turns out to be. She should have set a higher price on herself—she should, indeed. Now I know all you are going to say about him and his adorable qualities, and our stepping into the rights hitherto considered his, and the mutual attachment—as if I did not know all about that sort of trash."

"You!"

"Yes, I was in love once, and how long did it last? It was well she grew penitent, and got spirited away by some goody-goody people, before I grew quite wearied, or the bore would have been greater than it was."

"Oh, Godfrey, that was a dark story."

"Dark story!—It was more her fault than mine; and the nuisance it was old Serle getting hold of it made me almost hate her. I wonder who the people were who took her up so desperately. I told you—didn't I?—of

the trick they played me—sending me the bill for her coffin?"

"Yes, you told me long ago," said Edgar.

"Well, I believe that trick cost me a rich wife. I had been playing the agreeable to an heiress all day, and was to meet the damsel again in the evening, but that black-edged bill threw me off my balance—it did: it made me drink like a thirsty fish, and I said or did something which offended my lady, and she accepted another fellow the very next week. But I mention all this to show you what mere trash love affairs are, how one gets over them, and how little they ought to affect the realities of life."

"And you called *that* love, did you?" asked Edgar.

"I declare to you I was more in love than I ever was in my life, or, as I believe, I ever shall be again. If that girl had known a little more of life, and made me bid higher, I cannot tell what I might not have done rather than lose her."

"But being ignorant of life, you took advantage of her simplicity. Oh, Godfrey!"

"She was so handsome," returned the other, with a shrug of his shoulders, and as

if that fact really excused his villany. "I declare to you, whenever I see any one the least like her—though to be sure I seldom do—I feel in a sort of dizzy rage as if some one had a hand on my throat. By the-bye, Edgar, when you are married, do you mean to tell your Agnes all the family secrets?"

"Godfrey,—when I recollect your notions of love and license—I would rather you did not pass Miss Bendoran's name through your lips, thus freely. I shall reverence my wife, but never make a pledge that can fetter my speech or limit our confidence."

"Edgar, why don't you take to the stage? You would make such a capital tragedy hero. I declare I never met with anything like you, out of a book."

While the brothers were thus engaged, Arthur and Philippa were privileged to enjoy a *téte-à-téte* near the well-known drawing-room window. Though the year was two days older than when we last saw them there, the temperature, by a common weather caprice, was still more summer-like and balmy. It was delightful to let in the soft air, and to listen to the birds, which appeared to have mistaken the end of September for early sum-

mer; yet perhaps the birds were little heeded otherwise than as their songs seemed the harmonious accompaniments to speech that was yet more musical.

Philippa was seated in a large easy chair, the draperies of a dainty fresh muslin dress billowing so that she filled the space intended for a much stouter personage. Arthur leaned upon the high back of the chair; he liked the attitude extremely, for every now and then he entreated Philippa to look up, and he had discovered that there was a new witchery in the upward gaze of those dear eyes. He had been talking about his stay in Rome, and repeating to her every minute detail he could remember. He had told her of the scene in the Coliseum, and that Lady Isabella had been persuaded there was a deep mystery about the assassin,—a mystery which she would never cease attempting to unravel. And then naturally they spoke of Agnes Bendoran.

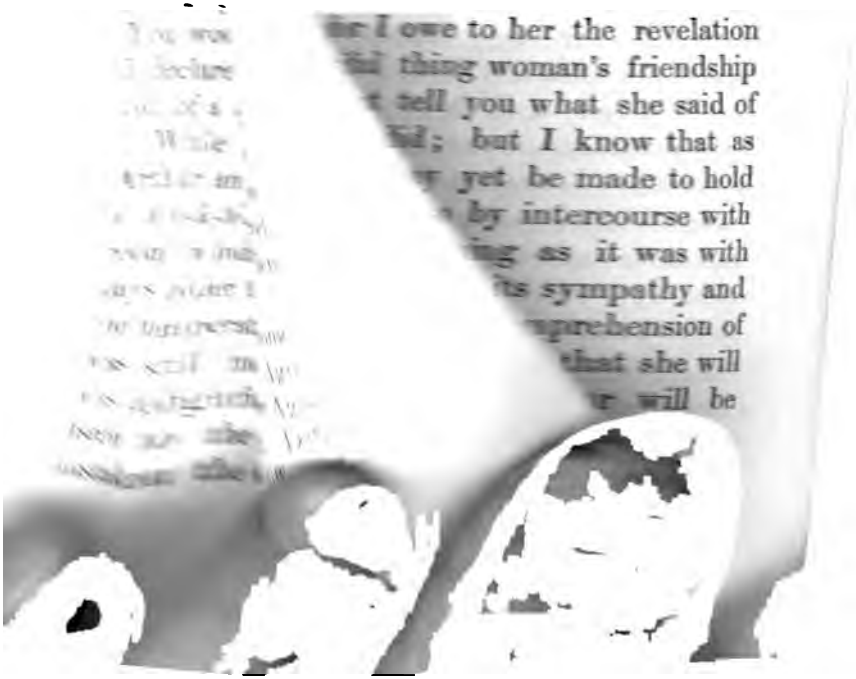
"I soon comprehended," he exclaimed, "the attachment between you and Agnes. Edgar has given me leave to call her Agnes, since she will so soon be your sister. Different as you are—and you are very different—

it [illegible] points of resemblance between you, do [illegible] account for your friendship and le[illegible] attracted towards her."

do[illegible] know, Arthur"—and Philippa's [illegible] betrayed the perfect frankness [illegible]—"do you know you are paying [illegible] compliments by saying that [illegible] like Agnes?"

[illegible] I thought in my inmost [illegible] the compliment was the other [illegible]

[illegible]ppa, "you do not know [illegible] how faithful dear Agnes


I owe to her the revelation
thing woman's friendship
tell you what she said of
d; but I know that as
yet be made to hold
by intercourse with
g as it was with
s sympathy and
prehension of
hat she will
will be

; with bright drops as
re not for the one dark
appointment for you—I
ld be almost too joyous."
darling?—Nay, depend upon
can never be quite unclouded.
I know perfectly all I have felt
d, you would see what a blessed
it is to imagine my grandfather's co-
descending on your grandfather's head,
ad of being polluted by the brow of a
scoundrel and swindler."

"Poor grandpapa! In the common course he would not long enjoy his honours."

"Then your dear mother would be Lady Rivingstone—a baroness in her own right."

There was a little pause, but they both were thinking of Godfrey as the next heir. Presently Philippa observed—

"You have heard, have you not, the superstition about Sutton?"

"Oh, yes; the country people believe that, were a bad man to inherit the place, the house would be burnt to the ground, or swallowed by an earthquake, or that in some other way the wrath of heaven would make itself felt."

"Certainly some very odd things have happened here; and the last few years, since I have been so much among the poor, I have often been struck with their observations. I mean the way in which they were inclined to connect physical signs and moral influences. There was a fine old elm in the park, which was torn and twisted in a storm about four years ago. Only this year has it recovered its beauty and vigour, and there is an old couple who will have it that the flourishing of the tree and the flourishing of our fortunes are somehow connected."

"I wish Rivingstone Towers had such superstitions about it," replied Arthur, with a smile, "because I should be sure to entertain some of them myself; and as the trees I planted when a boy are all thriving, I should consider the fact a good omen."

"Ah, I see you are laughing," she exclaimed.

"But not altogether scornfully," he replied. "You and I may not believe in omens of this description; but for my own part, I would far rather find my unlettered fellow creatures capable of entertaining these fancies than not."

"But," said Philippa, "they are not the most ignorant and dull who have these fancies. There is a brutish ignorance that makes a far denser darkness than such credulity, and to which the wildest superstition would be like a ray of twilight."

"I know what you mean: it would imply at least a belief in the unseen."

"And that is a great gain," returned Philippa. "I never grow hopeless among the poor, except when I encounter minds that seem to have no wings; minds that never can mount to a faith in anything which their poor crawling reason cannot comprehend. You know I have seen much of the poor these latter years."

"Philippa," said Arthur, speaking with deep emotion, for somehow her words had set up a revulsion of feeling—and sliding to a low seat by her side as he spoke—"Philippa, you were born to be a sort of Queen, to guide and to rule, to have power, and wealth, and station. I never thought to be so sorry for my loss of rank as I feel this moment;" and as he bent over her hand, his sudden gush of feeling betrayed itself in the hot tears which fell upon her fingers.

"Certainly some very odd t[illegible] somehow pened here; and the last f[illegible] ith one arm have been so much amon[illegible] d—well—she often been struck with t[illegible] Arthur had yet mean the way in which [illegible] consoled, and what connect physical sign[illegible] an" mood soon came There was a fine ol[illegible] to the whole world, was torn and twis[illegible] particular.
years ago. Only [illegible]s may not be very enter- its beauty and [illegible] they not as interesting as couple who wi[illegible] tologies of a lawyer's explan- the tree and [illegible]ndence? The reader shall be are somehow[illegible], except in the minute doses pro-
"I wis[illegible] distilled essence. Old Mr. John- superstiti[illegible] communicated with Mr. Pennington, a smile [illegible] mazed the adverse faction by shewing tain s[illegible] there was a new claimant to the Riving- plant[illegible] title, and one who founded his claim on con[illegible] very facts that they were employed in [illegible] establishing: but as Rivingstone the blackleg [illegible] was said to be fighting his battle with "pow- der and shot," that must be paid for out of the "estate," he gave no token of surrender; so that, looking at it from some points of view, the white-wigged, long-robed gentlemen would be likely enough to consider it a "prettier" quarrel than ever.

nding the daily mis-
rs, which arrived at
next week was a happy
the inmates—known to be
assing, and remembered after-
a tender memory. To be sure
onsidered the whole affair "slow,"
aving allayed his destructive propen-
s sufficiently by partridge shooting, and
btained a heavy cheque beyond his quarterly allowance from his father, he was talking of making a start for the continent in a day or two; for observe, Godfrey, the "heir," used his talent, Leisure, only in selfish pleasure-seeking.

It was evening; and now a chilly autumn evening, and the little party were gathered round the fire, just as we may remember them to have been five years before. There is only one form absent, and Agnes, though not now bodily present, is closer to many of their hearts than she ever was before: and though she is not among them, her accomplished work is here, her beautiful picture, "The Labourers," having the place of honour in the drawing-room of Sutton Court.

Amid the buzz of pleasant talk, a loud ring of the great bell made itself heard. The fact was, the intruder did not know the ways of the house, and had failed to find the side entrance. In a minute or two a servant entered the room, and handed a letter to Edgar, intimating that it was a telegraphic message.

"Excuse me," he said, moving nearer to a lamp: and then he read the document, without start, and without comment; and afterwards duly signed the paper of acknowledgment for which the man waited. Only Mrs. Sutton, who had watched her son's face as he read, and knew its lineaments so well, was prepared for some startling news, before he spoke. Nevertheless, there was a momentary hush of expectation when the servant had closed the door—a hush that was broken by Edgar saying,—

"I have some surprising intelligence from Lady Isabella Clinton."

"Good news, or bad," asked his mother, eagerly.

"I call it good," returned Edgar. "Listen to her words:—

"'Your friend A. R. is undoubtedly a peer.

The certificate on which his opponent founds his claim is a forgery. I am bringing the positive proofs to England.'"

There was no immediate exclamation, but every eye was turned to the patriarch of the group. The old man had been leaning both hands on his crutch-handled stick, and now he lifted it, and then struck it forcibly on the ground, as if to give emphasis to his words.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed: "I say, thank God, fervently, if Liars are confounded, and Truth is established."

There was a murmur of "Amen" from several lips, but Philippa gathered herself to her mother's arms, and trembled with conflicting emotions. Arthur rose, pressed Philippa's hand in passing her, and, approaching the old man, he said with much respect,—

"Yours is more real dignity than any mere inheritor of rank can boast; for you, and such as you, are the wellsprings of true nobility. With deep reverence I ask you, sir, to give me your blessing."

"My heart has given it you a hundred times," exclaimed the old man, laying his wrinkled hand on Arthur's head; "but now it goes with an entreaty. In the long future

that I pray may be yours, you will, I know, sometimes think of me, in the summer twilight, or by the winter fire. Always remember how I have loved our 'Queen Philippa;' she must be honestly, gratefully proud of something, I suppose, so let it be of you."

"And of my parents; and, grandpapa, of you," cried Philippa, stooping for her share of the blessing. "Oh, how much more contented I ought to have been! How tenderly, how curiously has my longing for proofs of our higher lineage been rebuked."

And Godfrey! Did he witness this little interlude? Yes, but with blanched cheeks and bitten lips. Soon he left the room, complaining that it was hot and stifling; and the next sound which broke the outer stillness was the yell of a hound, which he had cruelly kicked from his path.

CHAPTER XV.

EXPLANATORY.

"Man, if not meant by worth to reach the skies,
Had wanted wing to fly so far in guilt."

YOUNG.

To the brilliant qualities of Lady Isabella Clinton there must have been allied a certain tenacity of purpose, which, when it is associated with meaner faculties and less noble direction, is apt to be called dogged obstinacy. Recognising in the would-be assassin of the Coliseum the man who had threatened and insulted her servant Caterina, she felt sure he was not an isolated ruffian attempting a deed of darkness from momentary pique, or for the chance of effecting a robbery. She believed, too, she had something like a clue, however feeble, to guide her

in seeking to establish his identity; but, chained as she was by her solemn promise of secresy, made to the poor girl, she could only set the necessary inquiries afloat cautiously and mysteriously. Nor, indeed, would any other plan have been efficacious. Rats of the social scale, which increase and multiply under bad governments, only hide the closer in their crannies when a trumpet blast bids them come out, and no "Pied Piper" has yet been found whose piping will bring them forth, to drown complacently in a near river. Under these circumstances even John Bull is permitted to use, for their thwarting and destruction, the bright-eyed ferret and sharp-toothed terrier.

Lady Isabella had spent a month in the neighbourhood of Florence, during which period she had devoted herself almost exclusively to investigating circumstances connected with the memorable scene in the church of Santa Croce; and she had been so far successful that she had ascertained that the man in question was a *sbirro* who had served in more than one sort of dark service. Notwithstanding the customary reserve of his trade, there were times when he had babbled.

When the state of his purse had enabled him to indulge in the hot wines which he loved, he had dropped hints of the rich rewards that were to come to him, not from tyrannous rulers or bigoted priests, but from a fair-haired Englishman, who had secret work for him to do. But where the wretched being was now to be found, she certainly could not discover.

Then she proceeded to Genoa, determining to relate all the circumstances to Caterina, with the dim hope that there might be some little helpful details for her still to hear and consider.

But by this time Sardinia had joined the Western Powers, and the White Cross of Savoy was floating proudly over many a spot beside the banner of England and the tricolour of France; and when Lady Isabella reached Genoa, she found that Caterina had sailed two days before for the East, so far resembling some noble English women, that she went as a true, though a lay sister of charity, to tend the sick and wounded. Lady Isabella was vexed and disappointed, and not consoled by the subsequent discovery of a misdirected letter, which, if duly received,

would have prompted her to hurry her journey, and so to arrive at Genoa before Caterina's departure. Yet of the act itself she was glad, as she saw in it a new proof of her old favourite's fine nature.

In the early winter she again visited Florence; and by dint of avowing and loudly expressing her admiration of some curious old frescoes, still to be recognised in a certain convent cloister, she obtained as a favour occasional access to the spot. This was a point gained; and woman's wit and current gold improved her opportunities. She ascertained which was the individual in whose life and death she was interested, and was glad to find that he was one of the mendicant brothers. After watching wearily through many an hour of disappointment, at last she had her reward. One day he passed so near to her that she was able to utter his baptismal name, so that the sound reached his ear alone. He did not start, for his whole nature was schooled to wary self-control; but his swarthy face grew pallid, and his keen eyes had a questioning gaze. Lady Isabella sauntered beside him a little way, as she said,

"I walk daily at noon across the Ponte di Santa Trinita: accost me there."

And the interviews between the mendicant Friar with outstretched palm, and the heretic lady, purse in hand, were not the less curious because the Friar spoke English. That Friar, or Father, as he had a right to be called, had once been an eminent "Director" among English Romanists, and was himself a character whose mental struggles might have fitted him for the hero of a psychological romance. But, though he still wore the cord and the cowl, for years past he had ceased to believe the dogmas which the best years of his life had been spent in propounding. And what faith had he acquired in their place? Alas! not the bright white light of Revelation, but a lurid something, which just shewed him that there were such qualities in morals as truth and justice.

Ten years before, he had, under the seal of confession, heard a story of cunning guilt and fraud; a story which was revolting to those ethics which in his inner being had made themselves a shrine. By nature a shallow reasoner, and with a judgment often warped where his own interests and inclinations were

concerned, he did not fully measure his own falsity and cowardice in still officiating as a Romish Priest, when he had ceased to believe even in Revelation. He quieted his conscience—for even the mere deist cannot wholly stifle the silent monitor—by persuading himself that his priestly power was a mighty lever to work good. Probably every earnest and honest Roman Catholic Priest would in one respect have done precisely as he did, and refused absolution to the penitent convert, until he undid the wrong he had perpetrated, so far as the nature of the case and human means permitted. But this priest did more. When he had marshalled all the terrors of the Church, and brought the culprit to promise what was required, he superintended the drawing up of a testimony—duplicated in case of accident—duly signed before witnesses, and giving so circumstantial an account of a forgery, that no fabric of further wrong could henceforth be built upon the iniquitous deed.

It was by degrees that Lady Isabella extracted the story—though, as she had nothing to gain by concealment, she at once admitted what she knew—namely, that the

man who stabbed Captain Rivingstone was the same who had endeavoured by threats to obtain the box intrusted to poor Caterina's lover. Indeed, it was the name of Rivingstone which startled him into an understanding of the links between the two circumstances.

"I see now," continued the Padre, "how right I was to have a copy of the confession secured. I always had a misgiving of the penitent's brother who undertook to have the great wrong undone; and, therefore, it was that I took precautions, and planned that some day at least the truth should be established."

"What a pity," sighed Lady Isabella, "that when the right was to be established, there should have been any risk—any delay."

"Ah, signora, but consider my position. I think I am a coward, and my life has been the life to make me one. With great trouble and great art, and not without perilling myself by making a confidant, I did procure the documents I have mentioned, and one copy was sent forth to do its work. I could not watch over it, and assuredly it has been intercepted, or why should anyone be so anxious

about the other? The duplicate testimony is sealed till my death, for I cannot usher it forth, without incurring terrible penalties for betraying secrets of the confessional. And why should I do this? I only wonder why I care for the rights of a stranger and the triumph of truth as I do."

And perhaps for a little while Lady Isabella also wondered; for it is a standing marvel that men who throw off the restraints of religion and the hopes of eternity do sometimes suffer a flickering light of conscience to guide them. But her wonder soon passed away: she had seen such things before, and measured pretty accurately the character with which she had to deal.

It would be difficult—and perhaps tedious —to relate the manner in which her influence was exerted; the influence of a frank nature and clear bright intellect, that irresistibly inspired confidence in a convent-dweller, accustomed to commune with dwarfed intelligences and illogical reasoners, and who had not for years conversed with a fellow-creature without cramping the expression of his feelings, or hiding the cherished opinions of his mind, from dread of the danger of outspeaking.

It was, indeed, a little duel of wit and will, that took place on three successive mornings, between the renegade Padre and the heretic lady; a duel unsuspected by busy or idle passers-by—for it is so natural to lounge on that beautiful bridge, with the deep blue sky above, and the clear exhilirating atmosphere wrapping the fair city all around, and the turbid Arno hurrying from the hills beneath one's feet, that no one is thought odd for choosing to linger and gossip there. The victory Lady Isabella at last gained, might more properly be called a compromise. The Padre refused to tell of what the forgery consisted, and he strove hard for the lady to promise that no steps should be taken as long as he lived; but she reasoned and persuaded, and promised protection in England, if such were needed, bestowed money to make flight easy,—and at last he agreed that if, when Caterina returned from the East, it could be be proved to him that the old Lord Rivingstone was dead, the box should be sent to England, under such discreet reserve as should secure his, the Padre's safety. And Lady Isabella was well content with her success, though she spoke not of it even to Agnes,

not desiring to burthen her with the charge of a partial confidence.

And the winter came and passed as we have seen. The Suttons had spent months in the land which was Lady Isabella's home, but they had returned to England, like the birds of passage, and in the bright midsummer days Lady Isabella read in an English newspaper the announcement of old Lord Rivingstone's death. She waited now like a watchful sentinel, for she knew enough of Arthur's affairs to understand that the event was what had been so long waited for by his opponent. Soon Edgar mentioned the circumstance in one of his letters, saying, "the claimant of my poor friend's title and estates pretends to have found the registry of his grandfather's marriage, the want of which prevented his father winning the cause so many years ago."—And now Lady Isabella knew of what the forgery must consist.

She hastened to Florence, and desired more than ever to see the Convent frescoes. The wish did not seem strange, if only that the shade of the convent cloister was cool and refreshing, a very bath of shadow after the heats of the city. She asked boldly for the

Padre by his convent name, intimating that through him she had always bestowed her donations: she was shown a little mound of earth, unflattened yet by time or tread! Lady Isabella struggled, and successfully, to hide that her emotion was deeper than the occasion seemed to warrant—deeper and more mingled. Now her path was comparatively straight and clear; yet she felt a strong yearning to know if some words of Christian truth which she had dropped like seeds had fallen on good ground. Never could she know; but there was a little incident that made a strange impression on her mind, telling her that where all was doubt at least she might hope.

The newly-made grave was very near the spot where a tall cross was erected, and on every bright day there was a period when its broad shadow fell precisely along the mound beneath which the unsuspected renegade was buried. When Lady Isabella stood by the grave, that afternoon hour was striking, and the soft, well-defined shadow lay like a seal whose pressure reached the dust beneath.

Now was the time come, even according to the original bond, for the box to be opened; and once more Lady Isabella hurried to

Genoa, having recently heard that Caterina was expected from the Crimea, shattered in health from the manifold fatigues she had undergone. Lady Isabella and Agnes being, in fact, *en route* for England, it was easy to take the "Superb" city in their way. Busy, beautiful Genoa, with its blue waters and blue sky, its palace homes and their sloping gardens, looking as if its loveliness were purposely arranged to be mirrored in the broad bay! And yet this is only one side of its loveliness. Marvels of palatial architecture, gems of sculpture, and churches gorgeous with pictures and gilding, nestle among narrow streets and queer steep windings. Few visitors fail to remember the Goldsmiths' Street, and it was here—among her own kindred—that our poor Caterina had at last arrived, attenuated and weak, but with a spirit burning apparently but more clearly, as the body showed signs of decay.

Rarely had Lady Isabella shed tears of more sincere sorrow than those which fell beside the couch of the sick girl as she held her thin hand in hers, giving her all those details which it was necessary she should hear, and listening in her turn to many a

curious narration of the scenes through which the soldiers' nurse had passed.

"I am happy, quite happy, my own dearest signora," said Caterina, with a sweet smile; "why should you grieve because I am going to die? I have lived to see so much, and to do something; for, signora, among the Piedmontese I nursed, I discovered brave soldiers who proclaimed that they owed their lives, and their country one of its deepest debts, to that band among whom are my Dead. At last I feel that I have given them freely, but I know that it is not for long; we shall meet again soon. Oh, I have learnt so much—so much that I cannot talk about—the thoughts are too great. But you will live to see brighter days for Italy, days when my Dead will be honoured as they deserve throughout the land, and then, signora, you will remember Caterina."

"My Caterina, I shall always remember you with love," said Lady Isabella, tenderly; "and you know *I* have always honoured your Dead."

"Ah, yes, you have always: I think it was this that so bound me to you. As for the box, I give it to you; open it—do what you

will—who is there to dispute your right? Dearest signora, I am of your religion; I read your Bible, I have had no confessing about the box or its contents; no priest has knowledge of my promise, as if my keeping it had been a sin!"

And Lady Isabella opened the box in the presence of a notary and various witnesses, and the paper it contained was a full and ample confession of the cunning method by which the particulars of a marriage had been forged, and interleaved in the register of a certain English country church. It told how the fact might be proved by examining the binding of the book, and the document was worded throughout in the phraseology of a great sinner, terrified at the approach of death; a trembling sinner, who had thrown himself into the arms of the Church of Rome, to be carried by it through the shadow of the dark valley. It was evident that the crime had been committed for the temporal benefit of the forger's son; but this youth had died suddenly, and it appeared that it was the catastrophe of his death which had awakened remorse or repentance in the father's heart. He had perilled his soul that his son might

enjoy wealth and honour. When only a brother would reap the fruits of his guilt, he set about repairing the evil he had done.

Arthur Rivingstone's opponent was that younger brother, a man in whom the guilt of a guilty line appeared to have culminated; a culprit who had added hypocrisy to his other vices, for he had pretended to be shocked at his brother's crime, and willing to assist in atoning for it; but he had possessed himself of the first paper of confession only to destroy it, and obviously had been the employer of that degraded outcast of society who had sought by stratagem to recover the remaining testimony of guilt, and by the desperate stroke of an assassin's dagger to remove Arthur Rivingstone.

CHAPTER XVI.

GIVING IN MARRIAGE.

"Old friends who had not met
For many weary years * * * * * *
* * * * of four who formed
Two complete beings, man and woman blent,
Ensamples of connubial unity."

R. M. MILNES.

THREE weeks have passed since the few fateful words that were flashed from Genoa set in motion a new train of circumstances. Lady Isabella and Agnes have been a fortnight in England, and are now guests at Sutton Court. Shrewd Mr. Pennington has made such good use of the documents placed in his hands, including Lady Isabella's own depositions and Caterina's testimony, that he has extracted from Arthur's opponent a writ-

ten confession of much villany, and a withdrawal of all claim to the Rivingstone title and property on the part of the impostor. The culprit, however, while acknowledging that he planned to intercept the confession of his brother, intrusted to Caterina, solemnly denied any share in the ruffian's murderous attempt. He declared that the discharged *sbirro*, too well used to deeds of violence, must have believed that the sudden opportunity of ridding his employer of the hated Englishman, whose steps he had been employed to watch, was one not to be lost. He had evidently calculated on being rewarded for having so far exceeded his instructions; and there was a degree of probability in this version of the tale which commended itself to the reason. It was a relief and satisfaction to many hearts to believe that one who was connected with the Rivingstone line, however remotely and indirectly, was not thus darkly, deeply stained.

Insolence was quickly changed to abject, cringing humility, and the man who a few weeks before had stood defiant as the elder kinsman, now thankfully accepted from Arthur a few hundred pounds with which to begin a

new life at the antipodes. Not till many miles of the salt sea lay between him and the white cliffs of England, did the particulars of the detected forgery in the church registry creep into the local newspapers. Those particulars would always make a strange paragraph among the curiosities of crime; but as no human being has any personal motive to perpetuate the recollection of them, it is to be hoped they will soon pass into that gulf of oblivion where abide forgotten facts. They have no part or place in this narrative, other than as broad circumstances by which character has been elucidated and developed.

The patriarch Godfrey Johnstone seconds the wishes of Arthur and Edgar, and it is arranged that there shall be a double wedding during the winter. The old man longs to see his darling Philippa the wife of Arthur, Baron Rivingstone, whose leave of absence from his regiment is not quite unlimited, and every one seems agreed that Edgar and Agnes have been betrothed more than long enough. There is a little inconvenience in the fact that the brides elect cannot be bridemaids either one to the other; but as the double wedding

will make them sisters, there are reconcilements for the disaster.

Philippa has plenty of young friends and acquaintances from whom to make a selection, and there are "troops" of young girls, heartfull of generous "hero worship," who would look upon the bridemaid's bouquet at Agnes' wedding as something like the badge of an order of merit. Agnes remembers her old friendship with Millie Farrell, and recollects the American Ida who is now in England, and who has been for the last year her constant correspondent. Besides, there is her young sister Clarissa Blake. These, at any rate, shall be her bridemaids; and finally, Philippa solicits two sisters, some county neighbours whom she has known from childhood, to hold her gloves, and fulfil any other similar duty.

It was a week before the eventful February day that Mrs. Blake and Millie Farrell, with little Clarry and Elizabeth Hardy, arrived at Sutton Court, to swell the happy party already there assembled. But after the first greetings, it was evident that the guests were charged with news of some importance.

"Dear Mrs. Sutton," exclaimed Mrs. Blake,

at the first opportunity, "I want half an hour's conference with you and Lady Isabella. I am the bearer of a message of a very singular character, and though it chiefly concerns her ladyship, I am sure she will permit you to be present."

"I have not a secret from Mrs. Sutton," said Lady Isabella; "therefore, whether your news be a good or evil report, I prefer that she should hear it."

"It is good," said Clara Blake with a smile, "and I feel that it is more than I deserve to be charged with communicating it. Briefly, Lady Isabella, the money of which you were defrauded by your trustees lies to-day in your name at Coutts's bank."

"Restored! returned to me!" exclaimed Lady Isabella, with unfeigned astonishment; "oh, tell me how, and by whom?"

"By Mr. Basil Moore, the brother of the suicide," replied Clara. "But it is a long story I have to tell: it will be full of egotism, I fear, but you will bear with me, I am sure."

"Come to my den at once," said Mrs. Sutton, gleefully.

And there it was, in that pleasant room, made sacred by many an earnest thought, and

fateful word, and prayerful hour, that Clara continued the discourse.

"Tell me, dear Mrs. Sutton," she exclaimed, "does Lady Isabella know enough of my life to be aware that I once excited an especially bitter enmity, and had indeed for years a deadly foe in the person of Mr. Basil Moore?"

"Yes, I will be frank," said Mrs. Sutton. "In speaking to my dear friend of your many trials and troubles, I did mention the malignity of this man."

"Only to make me sympathise more truly with your sorrows and reverses," cried Lady Isabella, putting her hand tenderly on that of Clara; and she added, speaking with pardonable scorn, "but if he resembled his brother, his enmity was perhaps safer than his friendship."

"I am glad, very glad, you know how I was persecuted," returned Mrs. Blake; "but I owe it to this bitter, proud man, now lying stung to death by the ignominy heaped on his family name, to declare to you that no two men could be more opposite than those two brothers. Basil Moore hated injustice, and dreaded dishonour, with the absolute loath-

ing inherent in those proud natures, which stand like towers in the strength of their own unswerving rectitude and uprightness."

"I know the class of persons," observed Lady Isabella. "Seldom are they tender and pitiful to feelings with which they cannot sympathise; and sometimes they are more than unmerciful—they can be cruel."

"Precisely so," returned Clara; "and it seems to me that there are occasions on which it is possible for them to be unmerciful even to themselves. Basil Moore has felt his brother's crime with such a personal anguish of shame, that his pride is shattered, like a tower—to which I compared him—thrown down by a convulsion of nature. I should have told you that, notwithstanding the bitter passages between us, we have been on bowing terms for several months. Indeed, during a long illness Mr. Moore had some months ago, I used to send him flowers from our garden, knowing that the love of flowers had once been almost a passion with him. And I must confess to having more than once sent him some portion of the fruit and flowers, rarer than my own, so lavishly bestowed on me by my friends here. I know by unforgotten

experience how sickness and sorrow are deepened by poverty, and, though some people thought otherwise, I believed Mr. Moore to be poor. I judged by his mean lodgings, and apparent penury. But above all, I wished to give some token by which in his trouble he might know that I had forgiven him."

"I am glad," said Mrs. Sutton, "very glad that we, supplying you out of our abundance, should have helped you so to satisfy yourself and soothe him. Yet, how very strange that such a man should care for flowers."

"Strange at the first thought," observed Lady Isabella; "but not strange after a little reflection. I myself love flowers dearly; that is to say, odorous flowers, for a beautiful flower without scent has to me something corpse-like about it; but I know that they generally appeal only to the fancy, not to the heart."

"You are right," exclaimed Mrs. Blake; and there was something in her tone which implied that a truth had newly presented itself to her mind.

"I think I am," replied Lady Isabella; "for my opinion has not been formed hastily.

It used to puzzle me to find weak women and narrow worldlings of my acquaintance enthusiasts in floriculture; and I once knew a dreadful man, capable of riding his horse nearly to death, and of half flaying a disobedient hound in his wrath, who would spend hours in his conservatories, watching the opening of exotic buds, and guiding the tendrils of climbers with his own fingers. But don't mistake me," continued Lady Isabella; "such people were the better for their love of flowers, insomuch that their fancy being thus occupied and refreshed, left a door open to their souls, by which better thoughts might enter. They would have been still harder, colder, crueller, without that one softening influence."

"You only mean," said Mrs. Sutton, "that people judge rashly when they decide that a love of flowers stands for the earnest of gentleness and refinement. Of course you do not deny that it may accompany the noblest and most generous natures?"

"Not only may, but must, I think. Only with these the love is of a different character. The hidden suggestiveness, the half-told mysteries, the occult laws of form and colour, the

subtle, ceaseless marvel of odours; these are the flower-attributes which the grander natures prize, they being less appreciative of merit which consists solely in rarity, and reading so much of God's own writing upon the leaves of flowers, that they hesitate before they thwart, and cramp, and control their natures."

"You are right, quite right," again said Mrs. Blake; "and I really believe his strange love of flowers has been the little doorway in Basil Moore's nature, by which pity, and many better thoughts, have entered. Well, I must tell you he sent for me yesterday—sent for me by a brief, but sufficiently urgent, message of entreaty, that I would bestow half-an-hour on a sick man, who was too weak to wait upon me. So many sad recollections crowded on my mind, that I was a little unnerved, I assure you. However, the sight of my old enemy—propped up with pillows, in an easy chair, attenuated almost beyond description, yet with those great black eyes, which I used so much to dread, glaring from his countenance really like lights from a sepulchre—broke down, I think, my own last remnant of bitterness. As, by the help of a stick, he half rose from his chair, in the vain attempt to greet

me with politeness, I felt a mist before my eyes, and I put out my hand and grasped his cordially, before I fully recognised the contradictions in my own heart."

"And I am sure you had your reward," said Mrs. Sutton.

"If there really was any merit in an emotion of common Christian charity, my reward was, indeed, as excessive as it was unexpected. First, the poor man asked my pardon for all his hard thoughts of me, his cruel words about me, and his relentless actions when my interests were concerned. He spoke with a kind of anguish about my darling husband"—and here in the narrative Clara fairly gave way, weeping audibly, but she added—"Mr. Moore called him the friend of twenty years, the soul of honour, and accused himself in the most repentant terms for the injuries he had heaped on him. Ah, I found it easier to forgive for myself than for my dear Compton. If he had but lived to know this foe would so relent,"—and the widow was obliged to pause while she recovered her composure. It was at this moment that an expression played about Isabella Clinton's face, like sunshine upon still waters, lighting

the grey-blue eyes, and altering the lines about the mouth, an expression whose hieroglyphics the old friend Margaret Sutton faithfully deciphered.

"But I must complete my tale," continued Mrs. Blake, as soon as her paroxysm of tears had a little subsided: "Mr. Moore sold his house and furniture, his horses and carriages, more than a year ago, and while accumulating capital, has ever since his brother's flight lived meanly and obscurely, that he might repair the injuries that brother had inflicted. Those piercing eyes of his, with the basilisk power, as people say, appear to have also the faculty of searching out all the knots and net-works of people's lives. I found that he knew all the particulars of Lady Isabella's generous protection of Agnes, and munificence to me, and he thought truly that he was conferring a great privilege and pleasure on me by making me the instrument just at this juncture of communicating the fact I have mentioned."

"How strange a character!" exclaimed the listeners simultaneously, and Lady Isabella added—

"What heights and depths of good and

me with politeness, I felt a m
eyes, and I put out my hand
cordially, before I fully rec
dictions in my own heart.'

"And I am sure yo Blake,
said Mrs. Sutton. wer. He

"If there really w life annuity,
tion of common Chr pprehension of
was, indeed, as exc o look upon him
First, the poor m is the twilight of
his hard thoug m. I think the op-
about me, and have contended in his
interests were e poor body between them.
a kind of r elieve that he will survive
band"—and nter."
fairly gav he will live for me to see and
added—' m," said Lady Isabella, with emo-
twenty Wrongs are not so often thus re-
himsel —embezzled thousands not so often
injuri that the deed should be passed by
it e Well, it may give Mr. Pennington
de the trouble of another paragraph in Agnes's
th marriage settlement, but it needs not to delay
the wedding, I think."

Only a little week was there to slip away
amid all the starts of hurry, the bewildering

ll, the loitering haste
dinous arrange-
ing "*comme il*
pleted. And here
be doubled, for were
es to be equipped!—
ad the courage to confess
on dress as one of the fine
g amenable to higher laws than
fashions, although they by no means
ed those flowery fetters. Of course
house was full of people whose busy
movements reminded one of an ant-hill. And how intimate, how lovingly intimate, the guests became one with another!

Marmaduke Serle was now ordained, and Edgar Sutton summoned his old tutor to assist at his wedding. Godfrey did not arrive till the evening before. Naturally he had been invited, but there were memories in his heart which made him shrink from the society of those who knew a dark episode in his life. Once he had thought of absenting himself altogether—but no, he would not have it suspected that he was ashamed or fearful.

And the February morning rose in all that tender beauty which our capricious climate

sometimes borrows in earliest spring from a later month, paying its debt perhaps with a frost in May. Though the tall trees were bare, they had still their loveliness, shewing in the still air inimitable lines of beauty and graces of form, and kindling the imagination with the expectation of bursting buds and summer glory. Evergreens not yet altogether rusty gleamed in the slanting sunbeams; "spendthrift crocuses" shewed profusely their "cups of gold;" snowdrops lifted up their precious pearls, and the fitful breathings of the violets made their presence known. Dear little flowers that perhaps were astonished to find themselves that morning in glass and porcelain, side by side with the dainty daughters of the conservatory. The brides would have it so,—not that the homely children of Flora and their superb sisters can by anything short of an artist's skill be made to harmonize, but because there were two or three individuals who accepted these gracious early offerings of the Sutton soil, as a Sutton omen for the double wedding.

The birds at any rate thought the time for mating was come, for they sang that genial morning till one wondered at the music

springing from such little feathered pipes. As for the rooks, their cawing seemed the bass notes of the epithalamium.

Of course the church was filled with spectators; but as the venerable rector and Marmaduke Serle began the marriage ceremony, the silence was profound. Every word of the solemn service was audible throughout the edifice, and so interesting was the scene, that there could have been few hearts so callous as to be unmoved by it. Even Godfrey seemed impressed; and perhaps the old accustomed church, where in comparatively innocent childhood he had prayed, brought back with painful force a memory of the days when his mind was uncharged with dark secrets and vague apprehensions.

If prayers and blessings were indeed winged enough to reach heaven, then were Arthur and Philippa, no less than Edgar and Agnes, rich in promises of many sorts of happiness. Once more we shall have to tell of a gathering at Sutton, and a solemn service in its Church; and meanwhile the reader shall not be wearied with trite descriptions of bridal festivities, smiles and tears, and parental blessings, and lingering partings. Youthful as the

married pairs still were, they had seen something of human life, its uncertain good and very certain cares; yet all the more likely was the scroll of their lives to unwind fairly because they did not indulge in insane dreams of sublunary bliss, but by a half divine prescience saw that if human happiness is to exist at all, it must be tasted just in proportion as humanity keeps in its orbit of Duty. Ah, if young people would but learn early what they have to learn sooner or later, that Pleasure is as plentiful in the world as weeds, and Happiness one of its choicest products! We may stuff our wallet with pleasure from morning till night, and not find therein at last one wheaten ear of happiness for bread, or seed-corn for future harvests.

But Agnes left behind her a gift, that was only to be exhibited and presented after her departure on the honeymoon tour. It was an altar-piece for the church in which she had just been married—a picture on which her best powers had been expended. She had chosen for the subject the figure of Our Lord, as the Good Shepherd, carrying in his arms the recovered wanderer of the flock; and though, from the nature of the theme,

she could not but walk near the tracks of the old masters, she had found a little pathway of her own. Despising no good example that could be set before her, and yet finally always seeing with her own eyes, and judging with her own judgment, there was a certain stamp on her productions, which kindly critics called originality. Strange is it that it is always just this mark of individuality which in the long-run attracts the sympathies of uncritical gazers!

Whenever the artist shews a genuine morsel of his own soul, he shows something which appeals to the inner heart of all humanity; and in those rounded and most perfect creations of all art, the Parables of the New Testament, the true artist has always a mirror in which to glass, from some new angle, an undying truth.

"Pray, does my brother's wife intend to pursue art as an occupation?" asked Godfrey Sutton, with something like a sneer, when the merits of her picture had been on all sides acknowledged, and while in the afternoon twilight a group of admiring friends were still lingering just outside the church.

"In her absence I will answer for her,"

said Lady Isabella, with great dignity. "Not as the mere amusement of vacant hours, not with any need, or greed of the world's homage, or of money recompense, will Agnes pursue her art."

"How then?"

"She will paint in the natural, healthful exercise of her God-given talents, as a privilege, no less than a duty. I confess that I should have grieved to see her the wife of a poor and struggling man, with a prospect of corroding cares and mean employments, and the subtle trial of being out of her just place in the social scale. Marriage under such circumstances must crush the artist spirit. But the true artist, by whatever instrument art declares itself, can never look upon wealth and station as anything but means to a loftier end. Why, you grant your singing-birds a bright cage, and sparkling water, and abundant seeds!"

"Ah, but the duties of wife and artist—will they not clash?"

"With the true wife and artist, never!" returned Lady Isabella, with earnest emotion. "How often must this wretched objection be rebutted! The art-nature of the christian

man or woman floods with beauty every relation in which it is concerned; and every fresh human experience pays back the debt in a tribute of knowledge and wisdom, to enrich the artist's mind."

"You speak like a poet," replied Godfrey.

"Therefore, believe me."

And now a burst of melody broke upon the ear, and drew them back into the church. At Elizabeth Hardy's suggestion Clara had found her way to the organ-loft, and, commencing her playing with a familiar anthem, soon brought out such tones, that it seemed to the listeners as if hitherto the old organ had drowsed or slept, but now awakening at her touch, was revealing all its indwelling power.

It was not only that for a year past Clara had taken advantage of Wilberforce Serle's offer, and had diligently practised on the grandest of instruments; but to-day her heart was very full of love and gratitude, and these gracious guests spoke out unwittingly in her playing: and if now and then a subtle fancy could detect a wail of regret, why, it was but like the plaintive minor modulating from time to time into the more joyous key. Ah, joy and

sorrow are near of kin! How could love and gratitude exist without the knowledge of a want supplied, or woe averted!

At the urgent entreaty of her friends, Clara Blake prolonged her playing till it was nearly dark, passing from the expression of one master mind to another, letting Mozart, and Beethoven, and Mendelssohn give out their utterances in turn. At last she burst into the "Hymn of Praise," and with its waves of grandeur still surging on their minds, she left the organ-loft, and came down among them.

The music had done her own soul so much good, that she was not thinking of praise and thanks; and yet, somehow, the praise and thanks she received were the sweetest she had ever known. The American Ida came frankly up and asked to kiss her; old Mr. Johnstone said, "God bless you," and Lady Isabella pressed her hand, being too tearful to be otherwise eloquent.

That night Mrs. Sutton lingered in Lady Isabella's dressing-room for a little while, before they parted for the night. The dear old friends had been but little alone together during that eventful day, and there seemed to be half a hundred little things to say.

"Dear Bella," exclaimed Mrs. Sutton, after a time, "I think you have felt like a mother to-day."

"Perhaps I have. Surely I may claim Agnes and Edgar for my children. But, Margaret, will you laugh if I tell you that I feel—at last I feel—as if I were a wife!"

"A wife?"

"Yes: I am sure you remember the other day, when that poor woman wept over the memory of her second husband. I saw by a flash that you, like myself, understood the truth, and that it was in *his* grave her wifely love was buried. I felt at that moment as if there were an unwinding of grave-clothes about my own heart; and strange, yes, very strange it was, that while she was playing to-day in that magnificent, seraphic manner, the resurrection appeared to me justified and completed. Margaret, I tell you George Bendoran is restored to me. A woman cannot be faithful to two husbands. She has selected between them, and I am content. Cannot you perceive that I consider this, not only as Agnes and Philippa's wedding day, but *mine* also!"

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER BRIDE.

"Now home he sailed when this town was won."
CHAUCER (Modernised).

GODFREY SUTTON left the church long before Mrs. Blake ceased playing; not that he was wholly indifferent to the surprise of her performance, or that he wished to slight it; but Marmaduke Serle was among the group of listeners, and the selfish, blind instinct of shunning a disagreeable sensation impelled Godfrey to keep away from his old tutor as much as possible. Edgar had not brought the two together without reflection, or because he was unwilling to sacrifice a wish of his own heart; on the contrary, he had hoped he was affording just one opportunity for a good influence to be exerted over his

brother. Godfrey, however, at once assumed a cold and distant manner, which effectually prevented any intimate intercourse between himself and his old tutor.

Millie Farrell had not witnessed the hanging of the picture, partly because the fatigue and excitement of the morning had made her enjoy a little rest and quiet, and partly because she had still a dozen or two of envelopes to direct, and wedding-cards to pack up. Thus it happened that when Godfrey entered the drawing-room, he found Millie seated at his mother's davenport, in the act of writing the last name.

It may well be supposed that, in her intercourse with Godfrey Sutton, Millie never exceeded the bounds of ordinary but frigid politeness. Indeed, his presence was inexpressibly painful to her. It awakened sorrowful memories till they took the shape of present realities; it aroused indignation till she felt she was growing unchristian in her anger—even his existence threw a shadow long and dark over the brightest hope and belief of her own earthly future.

Nevertheless, for very many sakes, she did keep her manner up to the edge of

civility; and, as Godfrey was utterly without suspicion of her acquaintance with his poor victim, had he observed any chill dignity in her manner, he would never have traced it to its right cause. Therefore, when he saw her preparing to seal the envelopes, nothing could be more natural than that he should light the taper for her use, and hand her the white sealing-wax.

"You have had rather an arduous task, Miss Farrell," he observed, as he stood close to her chair; and Millie did not see the little start which followed his words.

"No, not very," she replied, adding, "I have had so much help that I have only directed a dozen or two besides these."

"Shall I take them into the hall? The bag is just being closed," he said, when the neat sealing was completed.

"Thank you," replied Millie, as, without looking at him, she suffered him to lift the different packets.

But Godfrey did not carry them direct to the letter-bag. A sickening horror had taken possession of him, when his eye first glanced upon Millie's bold and remarkable handwriting. Her broad, well-opened G,

her arabesque S., and, indeed, her bulky capitals generally, were quite peculiar, while every stroke of her free hand did its work in giving marked individuality to her writing. Yet she was not so conscious of the fact, as to be thinking of it at that moment, and calculating consequences. When Godfrey reached the lobby he turned into a little anteroom, and there deliberately examined every envelope. As he did so, he turned deadly pale, for there could be no mistake; the handwriting was the same as that of the few lines which had enclosed his ring, the change out of his ten-pound note, and their memorable black-bordered accompaniment. Millie Farrell was one, at any rate, of the goody-goody women who had snatched the wounded victim out of the "hawk's talons!"

"How cunning she must be," he argued to himself, "so carefully to have concealed her personality!" It was very evident she had no intention to betray him—of that he felt quite sure; and something whispered to him, almost as if poor Barbara herself were speaking, "Humble yourself, and speak to her; it will be best, best, best." But the good impulse was dragged down and over-

mastered by the tormenting devils of defiant pride and unreasoning anger. She must have her motives for guarding his secret so well, and to these he would trust; and he would brave out her presence as best he might. Having come to this determination, he carried the little missives back into the hall, and dropped them into the bag. He was but just in time, for it was waited for by the boy who had recently brought in the evening letters. Only one of these was for Millie, but it happened to bear the Portsmouth post-mark, and, as Godfrey chose to busy himself in assorting the letters, it passed through his hands. He even made a mental comment on it as he fingered it, and remarked that this letter, forwarded on from her London home, was a man's letter, on thinnish paper, and full of writing—visibly so, the envelope being also thin.

"I am going into the drawing-room," he said to a servant. "I will take Miss Farrell her letter."

He did so; and there is not much wonder that Millie trembled and changed colour as she received it. *His* letter to come through those hands! It was too much—even before

she could read a line the envelope must be given to the consuming fire. She did not gratify Godfrey Sutton by reading her letter in his presence, but left the room with it immediately. None the less did he choose to put an evil construction on that letter. "Oh, she was a creature of secrets and mystery, for all her pretended goodness! He wished he could fathom her history, from his heart he did!" Thus he reflected, and almost ejaculated, to himself. And so, having in his mind dragged her down to a convenient level, he thought he should henceforth be more at his ease with her. Besides, she would be leaving Sutton the next day, and Marmaduke Serle was to leave that very night, and then he would be under no restraint. He meant to pay rather a lengthened visit; for Lent was coming on, when London would be dull, and he fancied he should like Sutton much better in the absence of Edgar and Philippa.

Yet the few subsequent glimpses which he had of Millie were not satisfactory to him. He observed now her icy manner to himself; and, though she seldom looked at him, he remarked that her eyes met other eyes quite

unflinchingly. Now that he noticed her more especially, he thought her not so plain and oldmaidish as he had fancied; but this idea only gave the more scope for his suspicions—and perhaps it was really true that she looked exceedingly well that evening.

A wonderful cosmetic is happiness, and that letter had had something of the elixir quality. About the same time that Mrs. Sutton and Lady Isabella were having their little confidence in the dressing-room of the latter, Millie was re-reading her letter in a neighbouring chamber. Perhaps, the cosmetic was being re-applied—but the toilette-glass beside which she leaned told no tales beyond reflecting henceforth a new light or two in her countenance.

It was about four o'clock the next day, when Millie Farrell, with Mrs. Blake and her little Clarry, reached home. Jackson and his wife had of course their little budget of domestic news to deliver, and many messages of remembrance, with wedding-cake and bridal gifts, to receive.

"Not many callers, ma'am, while you have been away," said Jackson, pointing out a few cards; "but a gentleman called this morning,

and seemed very anxious to see Miss Farrell. He said he would come again in the afternoon. This is his card. I hope, Miss, I did right in mentioning you were expected home?"

"Quite right, Jackson," replied Millie; and she continued, addressing Mrs. Blake, with as much composure as she could summon—"It is Captain—or, I should rather say Admiral—Neville, for so he has just been made; and I learned yesterday that he had arrived at Portsmouth."

"Oh, indeed," replied the elder lady; and Millie wished that Mrs. Blake had said something more—anything, in fact, which could have helped her to the task which was now imminent.

"Aunt," she exclaimed, as soon as Jackson had departed, for she was determined to dash into the stream at once, since help for her there was none—"Aunt, perhaps I ought to have told you long ago—and yet—really—I hardly liked—till a letter yesterday—and you know we have never been a moment alone since I received it—and I never thought he would be here so soon. I supposed I should have a quiet day or two with you at home."

"You don't—Millie—you don't mean to say you are going to be married! I never had such a surprise in my life!" And Clara Blake sank back in a large chair, as if really overpowered by astonishment.

"Are you so very much surprised?" said Millie, meekly. "Dear aunt, I have often wondered you did not suspect something from my having so many foreign letters."

"My dear, you have so many letters that I never trouble myself about them."

Rat-tat-tat—rat-tat-tat—rat-tat-tat! The door is opened, and in a few seconds ascending steps are heard. Millie had already thrown off her bonnet, and, as she rises, her shawl drops from her shoulders. Her hair is a little rough and disarranged, but there is a deep flush on her cheek, and her eyes are very bright, notwithstanding the mist they swim in. And she trembles visibly.

Probably the mode and manner of an eventful meeting are seldom laid down by rule and compass. Assuredly Harold Neville had formed no precise plan; but when he crossed the threshold of the room, and saw Millie standing a few feet before him, there was nothing so natural as to open his

arms, and fold her close and tight within them.

"At last! at last! Emily, my darling!" he exclaimed, kissing again and again her cheeks, her hands, her hair; which very energetic proceeding so amazed Mrs. Blake, that she again sank into her chair, as if breathless from astonishment. If she could but have been clairvoyante, and read over a few of the dozens of letters which, by their bulk and number, were almost bursting open the little ivory desk, she would have thought the fashion of this meeting one of the most natural things in the world.

"My Aunt," murmured Millie, by way of introduction, when the wild beating of her heart allowed her breath enough for speech.

"Your pardon, my dear, dear madam," exclaimed the admiral, advancing to Mrs. Blake; and taking her hand between both of his, he greeted her with all a sailor's heartiness. "You do pardon me," he added, "I am sure, and will understand that I could not for a minute see more than one dear form in the room."

"This is indeed a surprise," replied Mrs. Blake, with a smile, that expressed all the pardon that was needed.

It *was* comic to hear him questioning about the finery of women—he was so ignorant of their wants and ways: and when he succeeded in folding a shawl, just as "Emily" liked it done, I believe he was prouder than he felt that day during the bombardment, when—well, never mind what—he is only the lover with us, the reader remembers. By-the-bye, his betrothed was always the "Emily" of her letters; and it is not certain that he had quite liked to hear her called by the more free and familiar word, until she owned to him one day that, to her own ear, her right appellation seemed the rare pet name. He thought Emily Neville a beautiful name, and now all markable gifts were so inscribed; and as the admiral had had a legacy, as well as promotion and prize-money, he could afford to be lavishly generous. He whispered, too, that she would probably be Lady Neville before long.

And were there no shadows floating up from the horizon of the past, to darken the blue zenith of the present? Not for him, not for him! He talked often of his dead daughter, but mostly as if she were a living presence beside him; and months ago, in one

of those long letters from the East, he had related the strange vision in the China seas. His sorrow had about it no black shadow, but there were sad and dark memories which frequently dashed across the brightness of Millie's present, and she well knew they must shadow all her future. Yet, as people capable of any sort of unselfish devotion walk by a light and with a strength unrecognised by others, so she had her compensations. To be permitted to turn only the bright side of Barbara's death to the mind of the unsuspecting father, while the deeper sorrow that came of fuller knowledge sank silently into her own, seemed a gracious boon that came to her direct from heaven: and she would have told you, had you talked with her on the subject, that her generosity was only masked selfishness; for that what is called "sharing" that sorrow with Barbara's father, would have so multiplied the anguish, as to make the burthen seem intolerable.

Well, the April day came at last, as all fateful days must come, whether longed for or dreaded; and so, one more bridal has to be chronicled in these pages. The wedding of Harold Neville and Emily Farrell was

a quiet wedding, in the accepted sense of the phrase, inasmuch as the guests were select, rather than numerous; and Millie, with admirable good sense, eschewed such fuss and fripperies as were unsuited to a bride of thirty-four and a bridegroom of forty-seven. If a picture of the scene were to be painted, instead of etched out with words, the colours should be rich and warm, with a tender light of cheerfulness pervading it. Not a tear was shed, except by Mrs. Farrell, and she wept much less than was expected.

Millie did not ask her brother to "give her away," but she invited him and his wife to her wedding. He turned aside the proffered olive-branch with polite apologies about a previous and business engagement: in reality, he was huffed at their cousin, Mr. Fairley, being preferred for the rôle of dignity.

Lady Isabella had almost invited herself; for when she heard of Millie's engagement, she came at once to offer her warm congratulations,—declared that her great-grandmother was a Neville, so that the Clintons and the Nevilles were clearly relations,—and expressed herself eager for an introduction to the bridegroom. Then Millie did not forget her old

first friend Horace Jerrard, who at the breakfast made a speech full of such quips and quirks that they alone would have set up a second-rate wit as a stock in trade. But withal he was heartily and affectionately earnest, as Horace Jerrard always knew how to be on earnest occasions. Our old acquaintance Dr. Bryant was also present, his pride and consequence being fully gratified on the occasion. Gratified first in the recognition of his cousin Millie as one of the most happily influential women of her day—her new book had stamped that dignity upon her—and secondly, was his pride fed by her marriage with "a hero." Of course the privilege of meeting Lady Isabella Clinton and Horace Jerrard was in itself a wealth of delight; and no one at the wedding banquet saw that the wit, the humourist, and the satirist was the one for whose slaying Death's dart was first to be poised!

Millie's acquaintance with Mr. Jerrard had formed such a link in her literary history, that when she came to talk to her husband of her early troubles and trials, she could not but mention him with regard and gratitude. To have been kind to his Emily, when she

needed kindness, was of course the passport to his heart. As to her literary life and her literary abilities, the truth concerning them dawned on him at last, but without surprise at any sort of merit belonging to her, and without any very great importance being attached to it. Millie has the great happiness of being loved by her husband for higher and more sympathetic qualities than mere intellectual gifts.

An agreeable surprise was reserved for Mrs. Blake on Millie's wedding day. Mr. Fairley, still a bachelor, and now wealthy, intimated a desire to adopt his young cousin Clarissa,—adopt her so far as providing for her, though leaving her, for the present at all events, under her mother's care.

Perhaps Clara's gratitude took the shape of a "thank offering;" if so, it was one of which she has not repented. Ever since Charles Farrell's marriage, his mother had been miserable under his roof. Why should not Clara propose to her husband's sister a calm and peaceful home?

"There are the rooms Millie occupied," said Mrs. Blake, in making the suggestion to her, "and I promise, if you like my scheme,

to interfere with you as little as I interfered with her."

"Oh, as for that," replied Mrs. Farrell, "I am sure I should be quite happy with you; and I don't think I give much trouble, or that I am a self-willed person."

Mrs. Blake did not think she was in the least self-willed; and even hinted that, as now by patience, and carrying out the plans Mr. Blake had inaugurated, his sister's income was nearly unencumbered, she might afford proper attendance, and allow herself some indulgences of which she had long been debarred.

Mrs. Farrell burst into tears at the recollection of all she had endured, or else at rejoicing over happier days at hand.

"I do think I should like to allow Millie a hundred a-year, if the Admiral will let me," exclaimed the mother, "and then I should feel she would not be so much better off by my death. For you see, if I should survive Charles, all I have will go to Millie. He has got a rich wife, and is not likely to have children; and if I thought I were not a trouble to people, and not dependent on people, I

should rather wish to live to be old; for Millie's sake, you know, for the chance—all life is uncertain—you see—you see what I mean, don't you?"

"I see," returned Mrs. Blake, and she mused a good deal over the unfilial conduct which could have turned the doting mother so far from the worship of her idol as those words implied.

And surely this was one of "Time's" very curious "revenges," Clara Blake devoting herself to make easy the declining years of that uninteresting sister-in-law whose company even for a few hours she had once thought a wearisome infliction. Perhaps she has been glad to have mixed motives for her devotion, knowing that it is not altogether easy to keep the mind and feelings up to the exalted pitch at which we make "thank-offerings." But the two widows get on capitally together, and though there is never any dispute as to which shall handle the reins, why Clara pleases herself by thinking that dearest Compton would have liked to know that she would guide and take care of "poor Emma." And in truth Mrs. Farrell looks so well under the new ar-

rangements, that a Life Insurance Office might do worse than back her life against the feverish Mammon-worshipping existence of her son.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAME NEMESIS.

"Nemesis is lame, but she is of colossal stature, like the gods; and sometimes, when her sword is not yet unsheathed, she stretches out her huge left arm, and grasps her victim." GEORGE ELIOT.

THE 29th of May, 1856! a memorable day this to millions of people. It was the day marked out as the gala-day of all England, rejoicing at the restoration of Peace. If there were homes in which miserable men and women crowded in despair, dumbly declaring that war and peace and national woe and national glee were alike unimportant to them; refusing to listen to the trumpet call of joy's *réveille*, as not meant for the wretched, let us pity the dulness of woe,

the dense darkness of ignorance. For the fact that Peace was restored did concern every man, woman, and child in England, whether they knew it or not; and if public rejoicing is a sort of supplementary thanksgiving, they were right who crowded London streets in joyous parties, and felt their hearts bound at the flapping of flags and the notes of merry music, and lent themselves, as night came on, to the strange weird witchery of light and flame, artificially, artistically guided.

It is of no use reasoning about such things; there are deeper and subtler mysteries in light and colour than chemists can interpret, for luckily the mysteries of delight which strike upon the soul are just those which refuse to explain themselves. We might learn from the pyrotechnist how to make fireworks, but that abstruse knowledge would not tell us why we should be delighted with their display.

"Very foolish," says the reasoner, "to trouble yourself with anything so childish;" but we observe that the reasoner, on the night of public illuminations, does *not* seat himself in his back parlour, after barring its

window-shutters. Oh, no, he mounts to his house-top, if therefrom he can have a good view of the shells, and wheels, and rockets, and fiery rain and luminous feathers; or he walks between lines of fantastically-figured light, by which familiar places and objects are shown in something imitating the noon-day glare.

The time is not a good time for reasoning about the causes of emotion: he is the wisest who suffers his soul to be carried high on the waves of patriotism, honest hero-worship, and childish gladness. He will not the next day reason a whit the worse about reasonable things for the more rarified air he has recently inhaled!

Everybody remembers how numerous were the parties made up in London by those lucky people who had houses fronting the parks, where the grandest displays were to take place; and everybody, I think, recollects how incomplete social gatherings were considered that season, if they did not include a fair sprinkling of military or naval heroes. Returned from their wedding tour, and temporarily established in pleasant West End apartments, Admiral and Mrs. Neville soon

found themselves drifting into the full stream and current of London society in the London season. They were honoured, and worthy of honour: and, in fact, "the Nevilles" were sought by many people as guests, whose presence was enough to give *éclât* to a party. But really this perpetual visiting seemed to be such very hard work—so much harder, Millie declared, than writing books; so much harder, the Admiral considered, than manœuvring a squadron, that they had already begun to plan how they might narrow their circle. Nevertheless, some standing engagements must be kept, and though they had been at the Drawing-Room that day, and had dined out afterwards, they were expected in the evening at the house of an acquaintance, whose windows commanded a full view of Hyde Park.

It was about ten o'clock when, by dint of a little patience and great dexterity on the part of their coachman, they had traversed the short distance they had to go, and were just alighting at their friend's door, that a gentleman in evening dress, who had evidently preferred making his way on foot, came within a few paces of them. In so

broad a blaze of light, he could hardly have failed to see them distinctly; but perhaps his attention would not have been so especially directed to them, had not a murmur among the crowd—a murmur which speedily grew into an English cheer, proclaimed that some popular personage was recognised. Godfrey Sutton—for the stranger was he—naturally looked in the direction towards which the homage was tendered; and, at the moment that he did so, a pyrotechnic display added its meteor-like shower of topaz, and ruby, and emerald, still further to light up the scene.

As Godfrey Sutton recognised the wedded pair, he tottered and grew giddy with the spasm of a sudden shock. Of course, he had heard of Millie's marriage, but only that very day had the overhearing of some Club-House gossip made him believe it possible that the once obscure Lieutenant might be now the famous Admiral. Sudden was the confirmation of his terrible fear; for as he scanned the admiral's face, with its "fire-tangled" hair, and its leonine look, full of love and tenderness, as he handed his wife from the carriage, the startling likeness to the dead

Barbara was so evident, that Godfrey felt the truth of their relationship beyond the possibility of doubting it.

Millie did not see him; the Admiral did not know him: and so they passed peacefully on their way to the greeting and *féteing* which awaited them. But Godfrey—he could not enter the house and be a fellow guest! No, he could not, though he had promised to meet there a young daughter of fortune and fashion, to whom for the last few weeks he had been making pretty speeches, and whom he was seriously thinking of making the future mistress of Sutton Court.

His brain seemed to thrill with agony in its quick conjuration of all horrible fancies, for that disgrace and insult were coming swiftly upon him he could not but believe. The scene of light, and glare, and popular festivity became intolerable to him, and with no purpose beyond that of getting out of the crowded, lighted thoroughfares into some darker streets, he made his way through the serried masses. Yet, when he reached the dull back streets, deserted to-night by nearly every wayfarer, the darkness brought but little comfort; it only seemed a background

for the visible presence of father and daughter; and more than once he closed his eyes, as if to shut out the vision. But spectral sights are not thus banished.

Suddenly, in a narrow, dismal, back street, his foot slipped and sank, and he fell heavily to the ground. Among the multitudinous openings which had been made for the temporary diverting of gas-pipes, here was one which careless workmen had neglected to fill up. When he attempted to rise, he discovered that his ankle was sprained; and in great pain, and with much difficulty, he gained a sort of footing, and began moving slowly in the direction, as he hoped, of a cab-stand. Again he was nearing the bright and crowded thoroughfare, for the hum of voices was becoming audible, when a carriage driven at a rapid pace was seen approaching. Perhaps the driver, passing suddenly out of the glare into comparative darkness, felt half blinded, and did not see, till too late for safety, the bent figure before him: perhaps the shout of warning he at last uttered would have given ample time for a man with the free use of his limbs to get out of the way; but Godfrey Sutton's Nemesis was at hand,

and she clogged his feet, and she clutched his shoulder, and threw him beneath those murderous wheels, which were rapidly spinning round! And behold, the street was the quiet street in which the reader was shown some "Pictures" five years ago: and the carriage rolled over Godfrey Sutton precisely at the spot where the "undecorated hearse" had received its light burthen!

Again had Godfrey Sutton to pass across the luminous West End thoroughfare, where a flaming Peace and starry Victory seemed to mock his senses; but now he was borne on a shutter aloft upon strong shoulders, while the crowd hushed their glad voices, and made way for the "poor gentleman that was being taken to the hospital."

He had several hurts, but the doctors declared the most serious injury was a broken leg; and at first they pronounced favourably on his case. When in a few hours alarming symptoms set in, they talked learnedly of the "shock to the nervous system," being cognisant only of the shock of the accident.

Godfrey Sutton lived two days, and saw and recognised his family. He asked also for Marmaduke Serle, who was already on his

way to the dying man unbidden. They had a long and private interview, after which the sufferer was visibly more composed; and though there was mental wandering before the dull insensibility which preceded the last breath, his delirium was not especially painful to contemplate. The hospital nurses, indeed, remember to this day, as a curious fact, the manner in which public events, and especially the illuminations, influenced their patient's ravings, for he fancied himself the son of a great naval captain, and spoke with pride of his high family: then he talked perpetually of Peace and Victory, and starry Crowns.

But when on the inquest it transpired that the unfortunate deceased had been recognised near to the house of the friends who had expected him, about a quarter of an hour before the accident, that he had been observed by a passer-by to turn away as if slightly indisposed, just after Admiral Neville got out of his carriage, Millie's mind grasped some of the missing links in the narrative. For a day or two she passed behind her husband's chair instead of before it, whenever she could do so naturally, and avoided his close observation as much as possible; but as the Serles called upon

her soon, and with admirable tact spoke in suggestive, but laconic terms, of the sudden death of their acquaintance, she soon recovered her outward composure, though, assuredly, she has felt a lasting awe in the conviction that she and her husband were, indirectly and unconsciously, instruments to work such retribution. Without the subject having been named between them and Millie, Marmaduke Serle and his brother know what the facts must have been as well as she does.

Godfrey's remains were carried to Sutton, and Marmaduke Serle, who in the exercise of his clerical duties had so lately officiated at marriages, now stood by the side of the dead.

Inexpressibly solemn—awful, one may say —is our beautiful burial service, with its Prayers for the Living, and its calm resignation of "dust to dust;" and, in the present instance, the suddenness of the blow which had fallen, the contrast between the young expectant heir of a week ago, full of life and physical vigour, and this helpless mass of senseless clay, whence the soul had escaped, to begin the life of eternity, gave more than ordinary pathos to the scene.

Parents sometimes mourn the death of

even a very faulty and unsympathetic child more keenly than a loving child mourns for a parent, and the Suttons were afflicted by their loss. But they were comforted in time, and especially after a long interview with Marmaduke Serle, in which, though he admitted there had been a grave fault in Godfrey's life, of which he was cognisant, he implored them, for their own peace, not to seek further knowledge of it, and to rest confidingly on the belief that repentance came, though at the eleventh hour.

Marmaduke Serle is now the rector of Sutton Church; and, alas! within these few years he has had again to read the burial service over personages who have appeared in these pages. Near the marble tablet inscribed with Godfrey Sutton's name is a monument that tells of Godfrey Johnstone's death at a very advanced age; it was erected under Lady Rivingstone's especial direction, and is in its large simplicity the fitting memorial of a Christian Patriarch. Alas! there is a monument opposite to it, of one whose race on earth was shorter, but whose name is not unmeet to be inscribed within a Christian temple. For Margaret Sutton is a

widow, so far as death sunders the tie of true conjugal love. But, though Agnes is now the mistress of Sutton Court, her husband's mother will never need another home. The old rooms have their old mistress, and the dear ones who are departed are always recognised as "not lost, but gone before."

Edgar Sutton and his wife belong to a new generation, and, accepting its privileges, know that these are weighted with grave responsibilities. It is remarkable that poets think Edgar a poet, and artists consider he has the soul of an artist, while scientific men laud his practical abilities. A man in his position may be instrumental in working out great purposes, by a diffusion of his powers not less than by a concentration of them, and time only can show for which service he has been selected. But Edgar and Agnes, and Arthur and Philippa alike find life crowded with duties, which press them on to activity.

Then there are some little feet that patter about the old mansion of Rivingstone Towers, and another pair that clamber the stairs at Sutton Court, and trot about Grandmamma Sutton's room. Ay, and the little ears

already love to listen to "Grandmamma Blake's music." Older ears delight in that music yet more intensely, especially when Clara can be prevailed on to play the Sutton organ in the "dim religious light" of a summer twilight pouring through gules-stained glass. For her playing is not that of the merely skilful performer. A prisoned soul seems struggling through the sacred strains to tell of Him who doeth all things well; and so the solemn rapture seems to touch all chords of human emotion. When Mrs. Blake is a visitor at Sutton, the professional organist's duties are nearly a sinecure.

Lately, there was a party of old friends assembled at Sutton, and Mrs. Blake had taken the organist's duty on the Sunday evening. The Rector had read prayers, his brother preached, and, perhaps, Clara's heart was just then more than commonly purified by the service, and exalted. However this might be, she allowed herself such scope, and her playing was so soul-subduing, that the congregation seemed spell-bound, and many of them were visibly affected.

After a time, Agnes crept up the stairs of the organ-loft; and, when she could bring

herself to arrest the flood of sacred melody, she whispered gently,

"Mamma, dear, Lady Bella and cousin Beta are both in tears, and the people will never go if you continue playing."

The reader's first glimpse of Clara Blake was also beneath the vaulted roof of a sacred edifice. Let us look at her now for a moment longer, with her worldliness dropped away like a worn garment, her one great talent consecrated to the highest service, her heart at peace with all mankind, and full of love and gratitude—and it may be that we shall see in her history some feeble shadow of the Divine Plan, an instance of evil overruled by good, of choicest blessings won by paths of sorrow!

THE END.

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